

Practical Tips for Peaceful Living

(Volume III ... July 2014 – July 2015)



*... a collection of brief commentaries
on the meaning of real Peace, and
on the making of a Peace-filled Life*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

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“Every moment of every day, it is you and you alone who decides what you believe and how you act on those beliefs. It is you and you alone who chooses who you become ... And no matter what you have learned in your past, and no matter what is happening to you in your Here&Now, you always get a second chance -- in every second anew.” ~ unknown

*"Do more than belong: participate.
Do more than care: serve.
Do more than believe: practice.
Do more than be fair: be kind.
Do more than forgive: have compassion.
Do more than dream: **DO.**"*
~ inspired by William Arthur Ward



“The first peace, which is the most important peace, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their own oneness with the Universe and all its powers; when they realize at the center of the Universe dwells the Source of Life – what we call the Great Spirit, and that its center is really everywhere, that it is within each of us.” ~ Black Elk

An Introduction to what Follows

Being a Peace Pilgrim, it almost goes without saying that quite a few of my thoughts & writings from the past eleven+ years have to do with illuminating the profound “Inner Peace” that can be experienced by all those choosing to live the Way of selfless Kindness. Of course, it also almost goes without saying that this Way is more a practical manner of *living* than it is an abstract measure of philosophy or reason ...

And thus it makes significant sense that many of the aforementioned writings ended up describing several of the practical methods we humans can use to make real Peace a very real Reality in our everyday lives (as opposed to a mere theory, a mere hope, or a mere fantasy).

This is the third volume of my Blog’s collection of those written thoughts. May they inspire you to bring real, deep-seated Peace into the lives of others – and thereby rediscover that same Bliss in your own.

Amen ... Let it be so.

Scaughdt
(June 2015)



*“Out there, beyond all ideas of wrongdoing
and rightdoing, there is a field of Love ...
Go on ahead ... I’ll meet you there.”
~ inspired by Rumi*

*“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides
and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of Love.
And then, for a second time in the history of the world,
we humans will have discovered fire.”*
~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

*“Better than a thousand hollow words
is the one word that brings Peace.”*
~ G. Buddha

Power over addiction

(07/03/2014)

The great thing about our addictions is that they are actually amazingly potent (and frustratingly persistent) opportunities for personal emPowerment. Getting down on ourselves for repeatedly succumbing to cravings for our own unique forms of “dope” (be they cigarettes, or alcohol, or meat, or sugar, or sex, or politics, or religion, or negativity) only makes those addictions stronger ... Seeing them as ever-refreshed doorways to liberation, on the other hand, makes **us** stronger right away -- and our addictions brittle over time.

As addicts (every one of us is an addict in one form or another), it is important to remember that we are not to try and “beat our addictions” -- because we can't. Indeed, the harder we try to “get clean” -- as though sobriety is some sort of merit badge that can be earned with a short series of successes and then worn with ease thereafter -- the more insidious our addictions become ... No, my Friends, the only way to “beat” any addiction is to literally befriend it -- just as the only way to defeat any enemy is to give it the one thing it can't stand: Love.

Now please don't misunderstand me ... I am **not** advocating giving in to addiction, for this is not Be-Friending it at all. And what I **am** encouraging (actually, in-Couraging) you to do is to face your addictions with calm minds and open hearts; to thank them for keeping you alive in times of past crisis (for those times are where they were born) -- for giving you solace in times of calamity -- and, most importantly, for giving you an ever-present opportunity to become truly Power-full ... For you see, when something is easy to do, it is relatively weak when done. And yet when something is incredibly difficult to do, it shakes the Universe when done anyway. And **THIS** is the great Gift of our addictions -- that we become immense and potent Humans in every moment we choose to set them aside and replace them with healthier, kinder alternatives.

*Are you yearning for a drink? Well, you become Power-full every time you put down the bottle (or make a cup of coffee, or smile at a stranger, or go for a run -- anything other than fulfill the urge to booze).

*Are you longing for a cigarette? Well, you become Power-full every time you throw another one in the toilet (or use a nicotine patch, or go for a walk, or play with your dog).

*Are you hankering for a steak or a hamburger? Well, you become Power-full every time you choose a cruelty-free alternative (be it a fruit salad or juicy veggie burger).

No matter what your particular addiction happens to be, every single time you choose not to engage it, you transcend primal fear & insipid instinct and become a Human(e) Being once more -- and will thereafter be blessed with the greatest sense of Peace thereafter (a Peace will become actual Joy if you happen to replace your selfish desires with open acts of selfless Kindness for others).

And all of this would not be possible were our addictions not so incredibly powerful -- were it not so painful to go without them -- were it not such a great sacrifice to set them aside ... just for one moment ... *this* moment.

For that is all you have to do to truly beat any addiction: just set it aside once, and just do so for a few seconds ... No goals to one day “be clean” forever ... No “I’m going to do it soon” or “I’m going to keep getting better” ... None of that bland & feeble “hope for the future” stuff at all ... Instead, we must simply make just one choice in just one instant -- *this* instant -- *this* choice.

In the end, it is helpful -- indeed wonderful -- to remember that we are not more powerful *than* our addictions; we are powerful *because of them*.

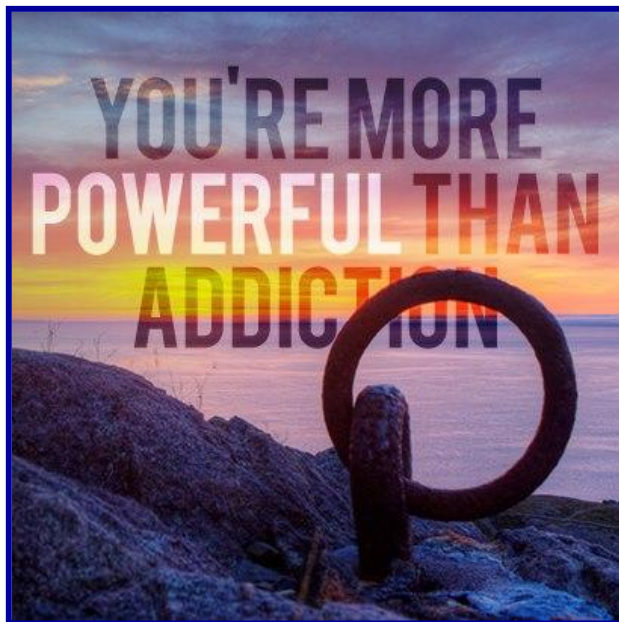
So here's to your Health, my Friends. May we all one day know the Peace that comes from liberating our Selves from the shackles of fear & selfishness!

Amen ... Let it be so.

“I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom.” ~ Edgar Allen Poe

“Every form of addiction is harmful, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol, or morphine or idealism.” ~ Carl Jung

“Sobriety really is a gift... for those who are willing to receive it.” ~ Ace Frehley



Just DO It
(07/13/2014)

Gandhi once said, on the Meaning of Life: "The goal ever recedes from us. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.... You must not worry whether the desired result follows your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means correct.... Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

Nike once penned, on the Meaning of Life: "Just Do It."

Personally, I'll take the former over the latter, if for no other reason than Gandhi reminds us what Nike has so obviously forgotten – namely, that courageously DOing things is not the only key to living a truly Good Life; that *what* we choose to do (with "correct means" being anything Kind) and *why* we choose to do it (with "pure motives" meaning doing solely for another) are FAR more important ... Indeed, leaping staunchly into the unknown is a brave choice, and indeed, persevering through pain & fatigue & doubt do in-deed reveal a great stamina of Character. And yet despite such well-intended admonitions from our self-beloved shoe manufacturer, such choices do NOT bring the ultimate Bliss for which our Souls ache & yearn.

In-deed, my Friends, we are NOT here to "achieve" or "succeed" or "conquer" or "win" ... We *are* here to one day leave the comfortable confines of self-interest & self-centered desire behind ... We *are* here to one day venture forth into the bold new world of selfless service & self-sacrifice ... We *are* here to one day LOVE.

Pease make that day today ...

Just Do It!!!

"It's impossible." *said pride.*

"It's risky." *said experience.*

"It's pointless." *said reason.*

"Give it a try."
whispered the heart.



Owning UP (07/19/2014)

We have all made mistakes in life, and in all likelihood, we will continue to make a few more. And when we do make those mistakes, there really is no need to get down on ourselves. After all, when a perfect Soul (a.k.a. the conscience) is placed in a patently selfish machine (a.k.a. the reptile-brain driven mind-body), mistakes are simply part of the game ... This is often referred to as being “only human”, and it is in great part a great Truth.

Unfortunately, this is also a Truth many folks incorrectly use to justify their mistakes or avoid the emotional consequences thereof ... You see, even though we are indeed “only human” (i.e. primarily ego-driven), and even though we thus are not required to beat ourselves up when we fall short of the standard of selfless Kindness, it is still *extremely* important to own up to our temporary failings -- **not** to deflect the blame for them onto others or make feeble excuses for them.

In the end (and indeed, even in every beginning), we are NOT controlled by our instinctual desires -- those longings to either sate our lusts for success & pleasure, or retreat from fears of discomfort & pain ... In the end, WE CAN CHOOSE otherwise! In the end, we are NOT dominated by the barbaric, selfish subconscious yearnings of our forefathers & our foremothers ... In the end, WE CAN BE humble & Kind instead!

Because when it gets down to it, not a single one of us is “only human” ... No, my Friends, we are all so much more. Indeed, we are all conscious -- and conscient -- HUMANS; each & every one of us, in each & every moment of our lives! ... And today -- indeed, right this very instant -- we are all free to act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so!

“Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be truthful with important ones ... If it is not right do not do it; if it is not true do not say it.”

~ Albert Einstein & Marcus Aurelius



The Key to Happiness
(07/18/2014)

To know true Happiness, it is necessary to choose to be Happy for the Happiness of others ... especially the Happiness of those folks we have branded as “annoying”, or “enemy”, or “competitor”, or “opponent”.



*“Love is that condition
in which the Happiness of another person
is essential to your own.”
~ Robert Heinlein*

The Art of Peace (07/20/2014)

*“The good fighters of old
first put themselves beyond
the possibility of defeat.”
~ Sun Tsu*

You might find it odd that I would quote one of human history's most acclaimed masters of military strategy & tactics to open a post about the practical Power of Forgiveness, and yet there is a method to my apparent madness ... First of all, it is always useful to illuminate what a thing actually IS by first showing what it is **not**, and Forgiveness is a vehicle for Peace, while war -- Sun Tsu's area of expertise -- most definitely is not. More specifically, as with any ancient text (or modern one, for that matter), great Wisdom can be found within its words -- even if the overarching subject matter is highly unwise -- if one but has the diligence and the humility to look for it.

And so it is with the aforementioned quote. You see, while Sun Tsu was correct to laud the merits of “putting ourselves beyond the possibility of defeat”, he tended to err in just how to do so. And this is where I now enter the fray ...

Sun Tsu's masterpiece *The Art of War* has been used by generals & military advisors for centuries in planning their violent campaigns against one another; sometimes with apparent success in the form of their apparent “military victories”. Of course, any objectively honest glance at any past war will illuminate a Truth far deeper & far more profound -- namely, that there is no such thing as “winning a war”; that the moment a fight is engaged, everyone involved is destined to become a “loser” in the most intimate sense of that word. Some may lose less than others, and yet each and every soldier in every single conflict (from those between nations to those between co-workers) essentially *loses* the minute they actively & aggressively engage their enemies in combat or argument.



Bill Green 2011

That having been said, each of us are now left with an all-important question: **If not war, then what?** If not “preemptive strikes” & “self-defense” & “just retribution” & “military peacekeeping”, then what are we to do when attacked? What is our nation to do when attacked by “terrorists”, and what are we to do when blasted by our more personal adversaries?

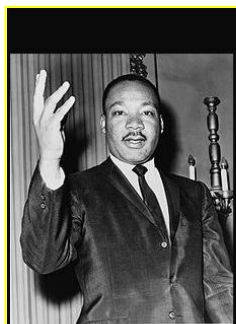
While its implications are somewhat complex, the answer is a rather simple one -- and one that we all intuitively comprehend. In fact, it is an answer that we have clearly known since childhood – and that answer is this one: Whenever we are attacked in any form or fashion, the correct response is to **FORGIVE**.

“But that's ridiculous!” you say. “Forgiving our personal enemies would have us be repeatedly harmed by them, and forgiving our international foes would have us losing wars, and ultimately our very country” ... Well, as tempting as it is to believe such statements, the fact remains that they simply are not true ... Allow me to explain by first clarifying what I mean by “Forgiveness”.

***First** of all, real **F**orgiveness for me is not a feeling or a thought or even a series of statements. Real, effective, deep-seated **F**orgiveness *is a verb* – a deed – an action; preferably a series of actions -- often silent, “irrational” & anonymous ones.

***Secondly**, to truly **F**orgive an enemy does *not* mean that we condone or support or affirm the action(s) that caused us past or current pain. It does *not* mean that we affirm the wrong done. It *does* mean that we choose to see past our enemy's behaviors to the Pure Being within them – it *does* mean that when we respond to their “crimes”, we respond to the Pure Being they were at birth; the Pure Being that they have obviously forgotten (at least temporarily) – not the impure manifestation thereof who is treating us poorly.

***Thirdly**, the **F**orgiveness I advocate here does **not** mean that we no longer discern “right” from “wrong”, or “helpful” from “harmful”. Indeed, truly effective discernment never requires us to label or judge others at all. While it is quite useful to judge which behaviors of others cause us pain and which of our own cause pain to others, it is **not** effective to then take the next step and negatively label the people who commit those misdeeds as being “bad” or “evil” or even “wrong”. Others might be mean to us -- even cruel at times, and yet this does **not** make them “mean people” or “cruel people”. Yes, recognizing their mean-ness or cruelty allows us to consciously respond with Strength and Compassion simultaneously, and yet judging them as being “mean” or “cruel” only serves to indirectly encourage them to continue acting similarly in the future. For what is attacked will always either respond with violence, or retreat and strengthen itself to fight again another day. This is just as true for the Nazi party in World War II as it is for your gossiping co-worker of today. Essentially, while fighting an enemy might be “reasonable” or “just”, it is NEVER effective.



Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies - or else? The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

***Fourthly**, while Forgiveness does involve being Kind to those who are harming us, being Kind has nothing to do with being “friendly” or “nice” to them ... In fact, the Kind deed is often an uncomfortably courageous one; for example standing up to evil by refusing to condone its cruelty -- doing so WHILE OPENLY FORGIVING its perpetrators.

***Fifthly**, it is important to realize the Truth that it is not **what** we do in response to our perpetrators, nor **how** we respond to them that matters ... All that matters is the **why** underneath the what and the **why** behind the how. If we respond with mere “niceness” or mere “politeness” or mere “diplomacy” to somehow persuade our enemies to become nicer or more polite themselves, then we are destined to know failure. If, on the other hand, we respond with active & openly irrational acts of Kindness -- acts that purposefully exude Compassion for our enemies' obvious suffering (for any fellow human *must* be suffering to knowingly inflict pain on us or others) -- and we will meet & embrace our only true Victory.

You see, at our most primal level, we humans are herd animals, and are subconsciously mandated to care for those in “our own herd”. As such, it makes perfect sense that openly acting like a member of another's herd -- or another's nation, or faith, or political party, or community, or family -- ensures that they will ultimately have no choice but to accept us as such, and then act accordingly.

*Is a co-worker gossiping about you behind your back? Openly compliment them behind theirs ... The gossip will ultimately cease.

*Is a classmate lying to you in front of your face? Call out the lie while doing them a Kindness ... The lying will ultimately cease.

*Is a stranger threatening you? Ask them if you can do anything for them or those they Love ... The threats will ultimately cease.

*Is a “terrorist nation” attacking your homeland or even plotting to do so? Repeatedly send them flowers & food (or anything else they might like or need) ... The acts of terror will ultimately cease.



It's not really rocket science ... In fact, it's actually rather elementary human psychology. No sane mammal will continue to bite the hand that repeatedly feeds it ... Every enemy has wants & dreams; every opponent has family members for whom they tenderly care and enemies of their own they dislike; every “terrorist” simply wants to feel safe & respected & loved.

Now I will admit that there is no “quick-fix” to Peace ... Indeed, I think there is a reason why all the “masters” I have ever read have mentioned that perseverance is required to attain Harmony. And there is good reason for this ... Essentially, the primitively selfish minds of all “evil people” are behaving in ways designed to reap criticism and condemnation. When they receive the same, they are affirmed, and go forth to continue their cruelties to then reap more of the same.

On the other hand, when they receive irrational acts of Compassion after performing a cruel deed, they cannot process this unconditional Love -- an unconditional Love that threatens to destroy the very dysfunctional fabric of which their delusional lives have been woven. In order to survive, these ego-based brains almost always attack the Kind person with even more fervor, in the hopes that they will go back to judging and condemning -- to becoming angry or saddened or afraid. When the Kind person chooses to **PERSIST** in responding with compassionate Kindness, the ego-based “mean people” have only two options available: be Kind in return, or leave to find a victim elsewhere ... Either way, a sense of Peace returns to the life of the Love-Giver, and the “cruel person” is -- at the very least -- one act of Love closer to awakening from their angry & twisted life.

On that note, I encourage you all to not merely take my word for it regarding “radical Forgiveness”, but rather to go forth and experience its brilliance for yourselves. After all, the greatest thing about it is IT ACTUALLY WORKS!

So in closing, and in alignment with the theme of this post, I humbly offer a very wise saying uttered by one of my very own personal “enemies”.

Enjoy ... and enliven!

“I choose gentleness ... Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.” ~ Max Lucado



A Time for Gratitude (08/17/2014)

Just like our pictured Friend below, sometimes we too get lost in our wishes & our wants; desiring what we don't have yet “deserve” -- yearning for what could be and yet isn't. It's a pretty normal state of dis-ease for many; a subtle yet persistent hum of dissatisfaction. All things considered -- if you believe your television or the political and religious pundits lacing our lives with rebuke and resignation, this soft yet staunch sense of psychological doom looks like an inescapable “fact of life”.

AND YET, **fear not**, my Friends, for it need not be so!

Gratitude -- like Love & Happiness & Peace and anything else of real value in life -- is a choice; one that is available to all of us all the time ... and it's always just one act of Kindness away.

Peace to ALL ... S



*“The most satisfying thing in life
is to have been able to give
a large part of one's self to others.”
~ Teilhard de Chardin*

The Blessing of “different”

(08/18/2014)

One of the most potent indicators for how Happy & Peace-full your life is -- & how Happy & Peace-full it will become -- hinges on how courageously & how gently you reach out to strangers, especially those who are quite different from yourself; especially those you find to be “weird” or “strange” or “odd”; especially those who are so different you can't help but feel uncomfortable around them; especially those who are so unusual that you want to pass them by as quickly as possible.

And yet despite this understandable uncertainty & despite this reasonable fear, these folks are not your true enemies, my Friends ... For, if you have but the courage to open up to them without reservation, it is actually these very people who will prove to be your life's greatest Blessings.

So please, go forth today and act accordingly ... **Thank you.**

“However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you If you do not act on upon them?” ~ Buddha



Gaining real Freedom (08/20/2014)

I received my first cell phone as a Christmas gift back in the year 2000. By the late 90's, Germany was the first country in the world to have a full-coverage cell phone network, and up until then I had resisted getting a phone ... Even though I had made it public to all and quite clear to my friends that I really didn't want one, the woman's team I was coaching at the time got me a cell phone anyway, and I too became “connected” ...

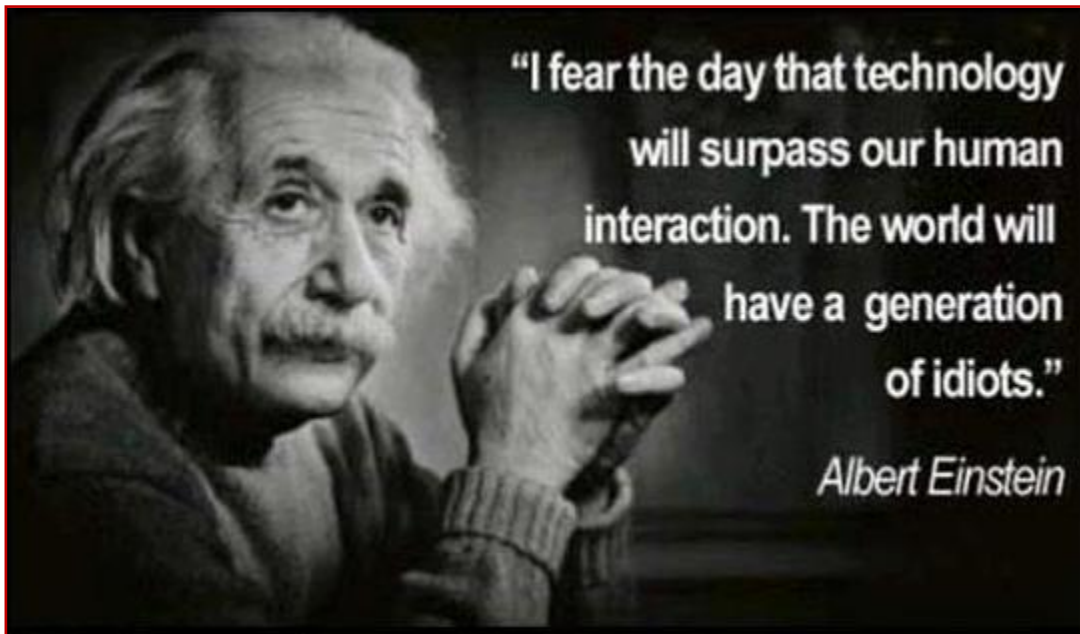
What I quickly realized, however, was that the more “connected” I became to the virtual world, the more **dis**connected I became to my life & its living. My relationships became dulled, my hobbies began gathering dust, and my “Nature-Soak” walks in the woods steadily disappeared.

Upon realizing this one morning, I got up, took my phone to a subway underpass, and threw it repeatedly against the wall until it exploded ...

I have been free and living freely ever since.

To this day, that remains one of the best decisions I have ever made.





"It's not that you can't get things done with the use of a cell phone; indeed you can ... However, the nature of what you get done is highly skewed. Just as the man with only a hammer sees everything as nails, the cell phone user accomplishes a variety of tasks that accrue directly because of having a cell phone." ~ Jeff Davidson

"Think about a catastrophic disaster where the cell phone towers went dead. How would you ever be able to text your next door neighbor to see if they were okay?" ~ Stanley Paskavich

The Better End of the Deal
(08/21/2014)

What this cat probably doesn't realize is that -- **A**) the dog gave up his bed voluntarily, and **B**) the dog thereby got the better end of the deal.



*“Teach this triple truth to all:
A generous heart, kind speech,
and a life of service and compassion
are the things which renew humanity.”
~ G. Buddha*

Finding real Happiness
(08/23/2014)

Real, lasting, profound, deep-seated Happiness is not found in being overjoyed with your own good fortune, but is rather fully known in every moment we witness ourselves bringing even a small speck of real Joy to others.



*“We are one, after all, you and I.
Together we suffer, together we exist,
and forever will we recreate each other.”
~ Teilhard de Chardin*

No comment needed

08/23/2014)

*“If you knew what I know about the power of giving,
you would not let a single meal pass
without sharing it in some way.”*

~ G. Buddha



[no commentary necessary]

Reaching down & out (08/24/2014)

The downtrodden aren't always homeless or poor or sick ... Sometimes they are people just like you and me; people with normal lives and everyday challenges; people who are simply down and in need of some Kindness. A simple smile can be their ladder; a simple kind word may well be the only helping hand they need to climb back into the light ...

These prisoners of despair are around you all the time; a few of them will even come close & cross your path this very day. And you will see them when they do -- you will see them not as “ingrates” or “assholes”; not as “jerks” or “introverts”; not as “weirdos” or “losers”. No, now that you have remembered that they, just like you, have pressing fears and unfulfillable desires; that they, like you, are Good People who have merely fallen in a hole from which they cannot rise without help -- you will see them today.

They will cross your path, and you will See them ...
... and then you will reach out to them with acts of simple Kindness.



“You should be nicer to him,’ a schoolmate had once said to me of some awfully ill-favored boy. ‘He has no friends.’ This, I realized with a pang of pity that I can still clearly remember, was only true as long as everybody agreed to it.”

~ Christopher Hitchens

Some Practical Solutions for America's Next War (08/25/2014)

Remember awhile ago when they tried to pull the wool over your eyes with the “Assad used chemical weapons on his people and we need to militarily intervene” fiasco? Well, we still don't know what really happened then in Syria, and yet we did get enough factual information to know that the U.S. administration's story didn't hold water -- not even an ounce of it ... It became obvious to almost everyone that Obama was once again blowing smoke to cover at least a few at-least-mildly-nefarious ulterior motives, and to your credit, you protested against his government's immoral war-lust -- and war was avoided ... I know I've said it before, and yet I will take a moment to say it again: To all those who raised their voices and especially those who put their bodies in motion to rail against that tragedy in the making, THANK YOU!

That having been said, it hasn't taken long (surprise, surprise) for Obama & his overseas-aggression posse to return. They reaaaalllly want a reason to attack Syria & Iran, and now with journalist James Foley's recent murder, it is pretty obvious that they think they have one. In response to that admittedly tragic execution, Obama smugly called the IS a “cancer”, and openly pledged to “do what we must do” to eradicate its members ...

In essence, Obama has once again promised war.

Now what is disturbingly ironic about this newest charade is that the U.S. is already effectively at war with Syria & IS (and will soon be with Iran as well) ... I mean, Obama has been bombing the bajeezus out of them for weeks, and drone striking the bajeezus out of them for years. Indeed, when I heard him babbling on about the whole thing, I couldn't help but wonder: WHAT THE HECK DID HE REALLY EXPECT?!?!

And then I thought about it for a minute and realized that there must be a reason that the Obama Administration has been drone striking and tactically bombing that region of the world with such rabid persistence -- and you can rest



assured that this reason has nothing at all to do with mitigating the threat or influence of terrorism. After all, it has been proven time & time & time again that killing terrorist multiplies terrorists, and that bombing terrorist cells only inspires more powerful cells to quietly take their place ... War begets war, my Friends – it always has, and it always will.

So what the Hell is Obama doing?!?! After all, he's clearly not an idiot, so he must know that his saber-rattling words of aggression and his saber-swathing attacks of violence have only made matters worse in the past, and he therefore must know that similar tactics will only make matters worse again in the future.

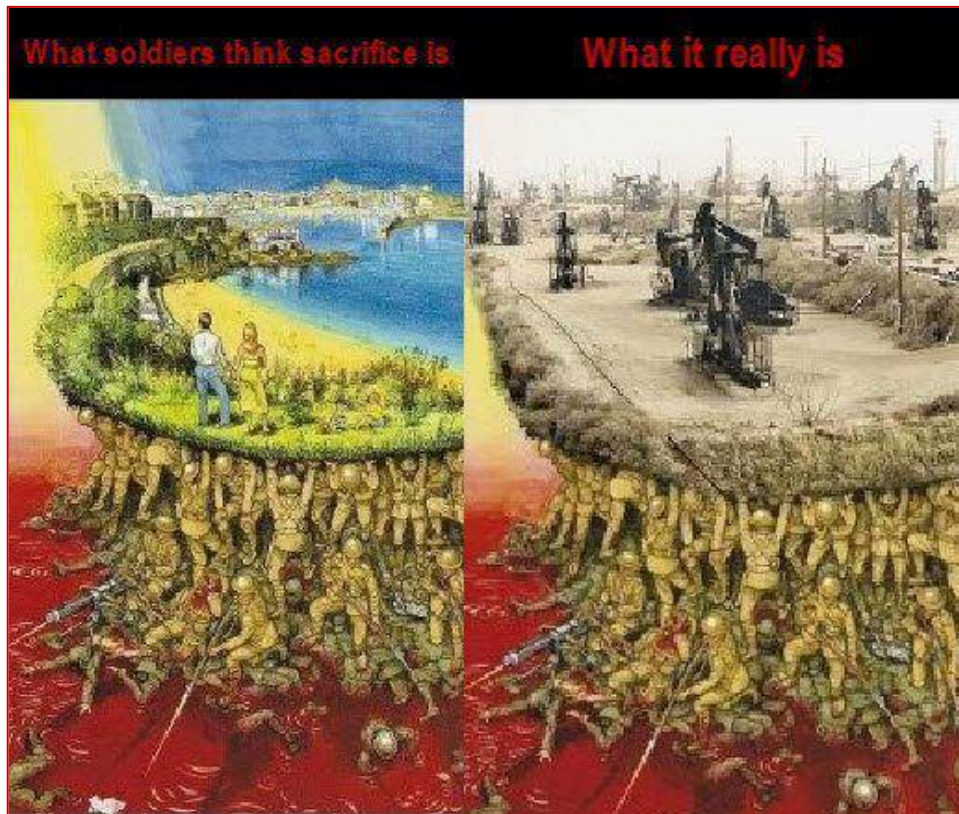
And then it dawned on me, just as it must be dawning on many of you ... He isn't stupid at all ... ***War is exactly what he wants.***

Now, his words may smoothly say otherwise, and yet his actions over the past six years have screamed this evident Truth to us consistently. So war is once again on its way -- another war that the U.S. provoked; and another war that no one can win. And unless enough of us stand up to him & his this time around, war is exactly what we are all going to get.

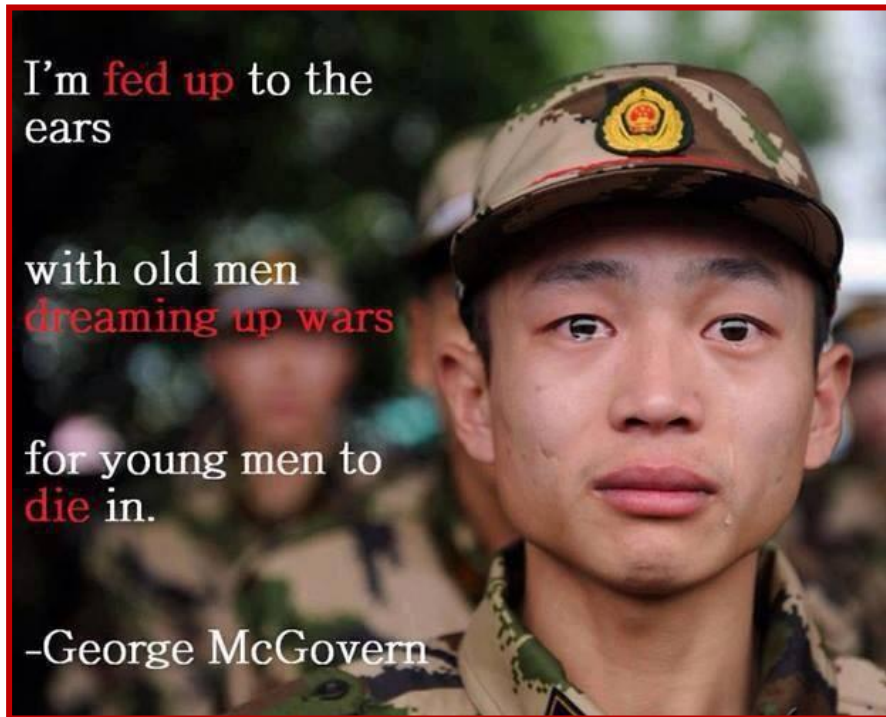
Of course, they & theirs won't be doing any of the fighting, mind you. No, that "honor" will fall on U.S. soldiers -- at least one of whom committed suicide due to war-related PTSD every single day in 2012 & in 2013 (the soldier-suicide rate has more than tripled since 2001, and more soldiers died in 2010, 2011, 2012 & 2013 from suicide than perished on the battlefield). No, that "privilege" will fall on U.S. soldiers -- who will all to one degree or another be ordered to commit acts of atrocity that will psychologically scar them for life.



And why? Well, obviously to create more U.S. hatred in the region -- which will create more terrorists -- which will inevitably lead to the next James Foley incident -- which will then give the U.S. government its next excuse to attack the region all over again.



Well I say ... **IT'S TIME THIS MADNESS STOPPED!**

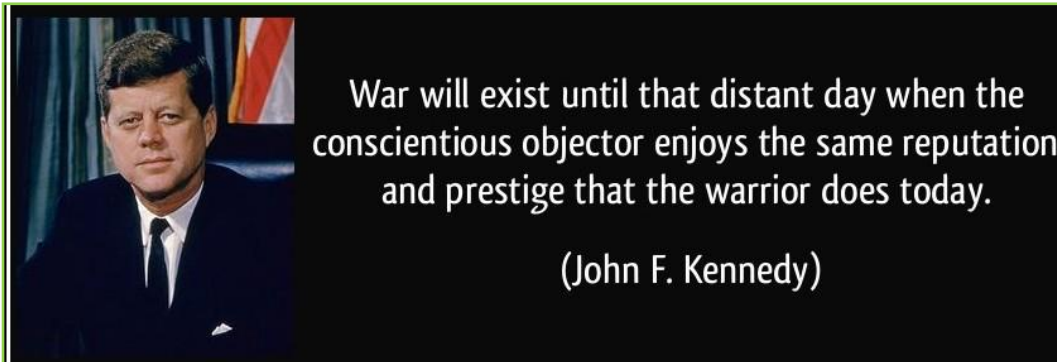


But how can we do so? Obviously, Obama (and the next President after him, regardless of with which party he or she affiliates) is going to continue with the tactical bombings and the drone-strikes. We need to simply accept the fact that there really is very little we can politically do about that ... AND YET, there *are* things that WE CAN still do closer to home.

Please consider:

***01) WE CAN Protest Peace-fully ...** Send a letter to your Congressman, Congresswoman &/or Senator and FORGIVE THEM for any support they have given to unjust military actions in the past, FORGIVE THEM for any support they are currently giving to Obama's call to military action today, and FORGIVE THEM for any support they give to criminally hypocritical & ineffective military actions in the future ... We humans are herd animals. That means that we stay the course when attacked, and that means that we instinctively try and amend our ways to harmonize with fellow members of our "herd" (i.e. with those being openly kind to us). So make your letters & emails uplifting ... Remind your "leaders" that you still believe in their ability to show some integrity, even in the face of immense pressure from the currently shady White House. Many of them might very well laugh and continue on with their war-mongering ways (after all, that's where the money is), and yet you are allowed to persist in your efforts for Peace, and you are allowed to have faith that a few of them just might return to the Just Way of their country's Founding Fathers.

***02) WE CAN keep our troops at Home ...** If you are an active serviceman or servicewoman, know that you are an American, and as such have every right to refuse to fight in corrupt or unjust wars. The ranks of the courageous conscientious objectors who came before you will be honored to accept you into their hallowed halls. Any coward can fulfill an evil order to kill civilians disguised as “terrorists”, and yet it takes a man or woman of real courage to stand up to those immense pressures and to refuse to do so.



That's what our soldiers are now being called to do, but what about the rest of us? What can we do to make it easier for such soldiers of conscience to say “No” to Obama's war machine? Well, for starters, we can offer them our affirmation -- and our support -- and our thanks -- and our money -- and even a place in our homes. We can openly let them know that if they choose to boldly stand up for the values under which the United States was founded -- if they have the courage to say “No” to this current call to illegitimately kill, then we will be there for them after they do so.



***03) WE CAN in-Courage the troops to disobey evil orders ...** If the soldiers you personally know (or any soldiers reading this post) decide to go ahead and participate in an upcoming conflict, be sure to encourage them -- nay, in-**Courage** them -- to be a force for Peace while they do so.

Remind them that they are never required to commit any act of evil; that there is always the alternative of saying "No" to any order that is malignant or malicious or immoral. Remind them that there will be thousands upon thousands of victims in this conflict -- thousands of people who will be suffering mightily; thousands who will be in dire need of a hug or a helping hand; a smile or kind word. Remind them that these victims will be fellow soldiers & enemy combatants, yes, and yet that they will also be civilian men & civilian women & innocent children. Remind the to be ready to be a Meaning-full beacon of light in the upcoming time of blackness.

Session Closing: (The leader summarizes the key points of the session and checks if the subordinate understands the plan of action. The subordinate agrees/disagrees and provides remarks if appropriate.)

Individual counseled: I agree disagree with the information above.

Individual counseled remarks:

I will not obey any orders I deem to be immoral or illegal.

Signature of Individual Counseled: *[Signature]* Date: *18 MAY 09*

Leader/Supervisor/Officer: (Leader is responsible for an implementation of action.)



***04) WE CAN walk the Peace-full Talk** in our own communities ...

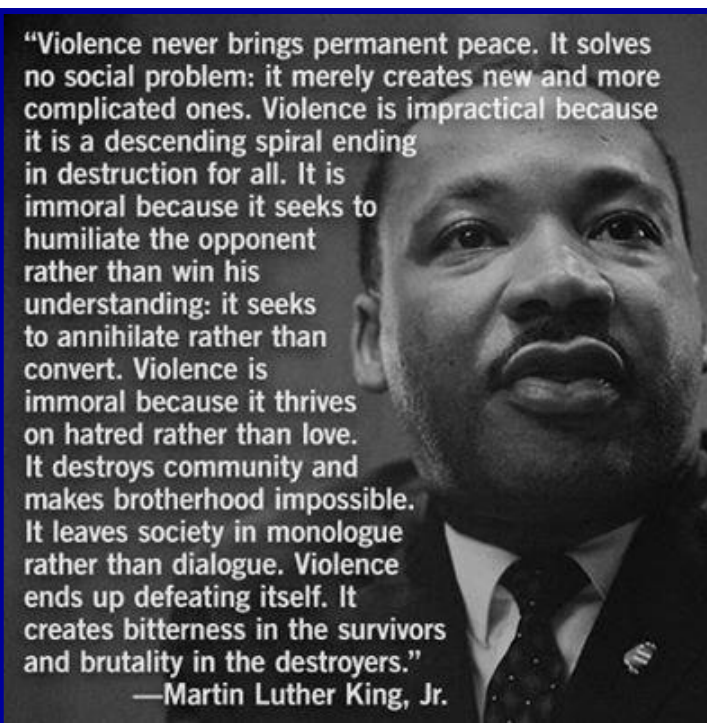
Finally, we can all best combat the war-machine by being forces for Goodness & Peace in our communities; by openly forgiving those who have trespassed against us; by openly sharing what we have with those who have less; by openly caring for our neighbors (especially those for whom we least care); by openly respecting all life in how we speak & how we dress & how we work & how we eat.

And then, after you've started doing all that, go ahead and pull the plug on your hollow politicians and their meaningless politics ... and keep rebuilding and refortifying your communities (and thereby your country, and indeed, the world).

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Young men go to war -- sometimes because they have to, sometimes because they want to. Always, they feel they are supposed to. This comes from the sad, layered stories of life, which over the centuries have seen courage confused with picking up arms, and cowardice confused with laying them down.”

~ Mitch Albom



“Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules, but rather by people following them. It's people who follow orders who drop bombs & massacre villages.” ~ Banksy

“It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.” ~ Voltaire

Rise & SHINE

(08/29/2014)

Rise and shine, people ... It's 6:30am and the sun is not even up yet and your hand can't even make it to the alarm clock before the voices in your head start telling you quite clearly that it's "too early" and "too dark" and "too cold" for you to get out of your cozy bed ... Your sleepy, somewhat aching muscles – like your drowsy, still groggy intentions -- lie motionless in rebellion, transparently yet insistently pretending not to hear your Soul commanding them to move, all while an entire chorus of voices are whispering in unison their permission for you to simply hit the snooze button and go back to sleep ...

But on this day, you're not going back to sleep. This day you will do something different -- you won't ask their opinion and you won't listen to that opinion when they give it to you anyway. Today, there is another voice within you to which you have chosen listen -- the voice of calm defiance; the voice that says there was a very good reason that you set that alarm in the first place. So it's time to buck up, sit up, put your feet on the floor, and don't look back towards that bed because you have important Work to do ... There are people in need out there and there are at least a dozen small ways that you can ease their pain, and you are going to get started doing so RIGHT NOW.

Welcome back to your True Self ... Welcome Home.

And this is the debate you engage every day of your life; for each day is a renewed series of arguments between the voices tempting us to walk the easy way and the Voice within reminding us that we can re-forge the Right Way instead.

And the voices of temptation are many -- with at least 10,000 tributaries spreading out into each instant; fanning out like the muddy rivulets of a river delta; each one slow & clogged with silt and sludge -- each one promising a path of cozy familiarity & least resistance -- a path of comfort -- a path of pleasure -- a path of ease.

And yet the thing is -- on this day you have already decided to return to the River; on this day you have already decided to return to a life that is not nearly as easy, and yet one that is filled with far more Power & Meaning & Purpose ... And now that you have made that choice, there is no turning back -- the current of Goodness is simply too strong. And your ego knows this is so, which is why so many refuse to ever make this leap in the first place – why so many turn away and never engage the courageous re-immersion into The River it requires.

And yet you have done so -- and now that you have done so, now that you have made your life no longer about you & yours but about us & ours instead, you have finally arrived at Day ONE -- the day of your personal rebirth.

From here on it only gets tougher, of course, and yet from here on it also only gets more brilliant and it only becomes more packed with Joy & Wonder ... And you can re-enter this LIFE right now if you wish ... All you have to do is get out of “bed” – all you have to do is go outside into your neighborhood (or your school or your office or your life) and put one Caring foot in front of the other.

And it is now, at this daring time of resolve, that you begin to feel truly fantastic; better than you have ever felt before ... Desire falls away and is replaced by Caring; fear falls away and is replaced by Service ... You are tempted to feel proud, and yet this is no time to dwell on the bravery you have exhibited or how far you have come. You understand now more than ever that you are in a fight against an opponent you cannot see, but one that you can always hear & always feel -- even always taste. Indeed, when you close your eyes you can hear that internal enemy you right there nearby -- close on your heels, breathing down your neck. And you know exactly who that enemy is ... That's right -- It's *you*; that other you; the you comprised of all your doubts and all your fears and all your insecurities; the you who wishes the real You had never shown up; the you who wishes You never had the guts to make a real Life out of your living -- the you that wishes you were still tucked away safe in bed.

It's always there, this altered-ego; you can never be rid of it -- and yet be not discouraged. Though it cannot ever be fully defeated, it has a permanent & fatal weakness -- and that Achilles heel is your resolve to Care again ... & again ... & again ... & again. This is what some call “the grind” -- the eternal battle between the you that wants only fun & comfort, and the **You** that wants to Live your life to the max before you die. There will always be this “demon” on your shoulder, and yet the more you choose to smile at him and Do Good Anyway, the quieter he gets ... The more you choose to get up out of bed at the break of dawn to go forth and serve others -- any others -- the less he has to say.

And this is the only way to beat the Darkness within you -- a raw, unadulterated, radical persistence of choosing to Live in the Light.

So today, choose to remember who you truly are ... Drown out the voice of doubt with your determination to make a positive difference in someone else's life; set aside your insecurities by remembering that your selfless deeds -- no matter how “small” -- always count & are innately potent; burn away the subconscious fears ladled over your Soul by instincts & upbringings & politicians & preachers. Simply keep getting up to go Do Good Anyway. Remember what amazing possibilities life holds; remember what profound Meaning awaits you in every moment; remember the deeper, noble reason why we are all here -- and remember that momentum has no power in the realm of a well-lived Life; that only *this* moment counts, and that -- no matter what we might have done or not done in the moment before -- we can always pause anew in *this* moment and choose to Love again.

So no matter how many times your other you tells you that You are bound to fail; no matter how many times it tells You that You aren't making a difference; no matter how many times it tells You that You are “not ready” or “too weak” or “too busy” or “too tired” or “only one” or “only human” – no matter how many times it tells You to just hit the snooze button and go back to bed ...

Get up and **Do Good anyway**. Even if only for today, choose anew to get up and BE who you truly Are ...

Choose to RISE UP & SHINE!

Amen ... Let it be so.



Dealing with Joy & Addiction (08/30/2014)

Addictions can be more than rough ... Just when we think we have them licked, or are “on our way to recovery”, or are even “getting a bit better”, they always seem to rear their distorted heads and womp us back into the dark & smoldering world of sin (a word which simply means “to miss the mark”) & self-destruction. Maybe it's alcohol that's got you by the balls (or ovaries, as it were), or maybe it's cigarettes -- or mass media -- or sugar -- or animal flesh -- or dairy products -- or cocaine -- or caffeine -- or negativity -- or judging others. Frankly, it really doesn't matter what your particular addiction is -- as, with the exception of cigarettes (which kill not only the smoker but everyone around the smoker as well) and meat/milk (which not only kill their imbiber but also the animals that must be murdered to allow for said eating), no single addiction is any worse than any other.

So the point is not how “bad” or “dangerous” or “nasty” our particular addictions are compared to anyone else's. Rather, the point is that these self-destructive behaviors are destroying our lives -- that they are not only damaging our health, but that they are also undermining the quality of every other relationship in our living.

Of course, the real issue here is not the damaging behaviors that manifest themselves in our everyday routines & habits, but rather the underlying dis-ease within us that gave rise to the same. In other words, the issue is not the addiction itself, but rather the fears & the desires that lie underneath it & inspire it.

As such, if we are to effectively “attack” & “conquer” our addictions, it will not be enough to struggle against the particular behaviors that are causing us their pain. Rather, to be free of their icy grasp, we must get to the source of the problem -- we must deal with our primal fear & our primitive focus on self. In essence, as our addictions are always patently selfish, they can only be effectively combated by the opposite of that selfishness -- namely, acts of Kindness. And the more destructive our addictions are, the more radical the Good Deeds we must engage to soothe & eventually replace them.

Now, raw acts of Kindness will always flow directly against the strongest desires of the fearful, self-centered ego (as well as the political & religious systems those egos have created & actively support) -- and as such, they will always be quite difficult to choose & even more difficult to engage. Despite this, there is some good news to share: If we stick with it, easing away from addictions *does* get easier over time; it does indeed become more & more fluid for us to make courageously selfless choices if we engage them courageously & if we engage them persistently.

Indeed (in-deed), the same circuitry that gets activated by learning a negative, self-destructive habit (e.g. gorging on vegan ice cream every time you're feeling lonely or insecure) gets *de*activated whenever you break that connection with choices focused on the well-being of others as opposed to pleasure or security for yourself (e.g. giving that same ice cream to a stranger). Like computers that can be reprogrammed -- our brains are quite malleable, and they literally reconfigure themselves to align with any new set of actions we choose to repeatedly enliven.

Remember, my Friends, it is selfless acts of LOVE that bring Power to all our deeds, and it is self-centered deeds of fear that take that Power away. Because all our addictions are fear-based, choosing to act them out automatically dampens our sense of Peace and neutralizes our Power to be a positive Force for Good in the lives of self & others. Of course, on the other hand -- both fairly & fortunately, choosing to enliven selfless acts of Caring has an opposite, fully emPowering effect.

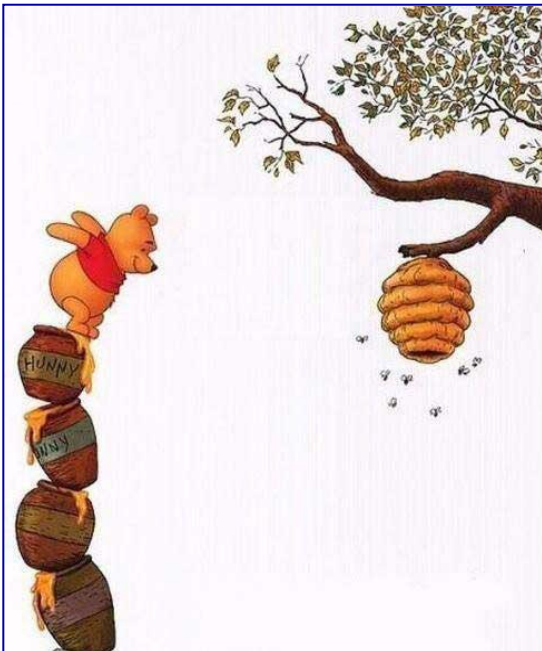
In conclusion then, cleansing our addictions is not about attaining perfection of Being. Rather, it is about simply seeing the "North Star" of our True Self within, and then repeatedly heading in that direction --- doing so moment-by-moment; choice-by-choice; and deed-by-deed. And that is the great thing about dealing with our addictions (or any other form of behavioral selfishness) -- it is in our repeated, conscious dealing with them (NOT their ultimate eradication) that our LOVE becomes truly potent and our lives become truly Peace-full.

Amen ... Let it be so for you & yours.

(inspired by Mary Boggiano, Jesus Christ & David Foster Wallace)

"If, by the virtue of charity or even the circumstance of desperation, you ever chance to spend a little time around a substance-recovery halfway facility, you will acquire many exotic new facts. You might come to realize that sleeping can be a form of emotional escape and can with sustained effort be abused ... You might come to realize that gambling can be an abusable escape, as well -- as can work, and shopping, and shoplifting, and sex, and abstention, and food, and exercise, and meditation, and prayer ... And, most important of all, you might come to realize that there is indeed such a thing as raw, unalloyed, agenda-less kindness; that if you do something nice for somebody in secret -- anonymously, without letting the person you did it for know it was you, or anybody else know what it was you did, or in any way or form trying to get credit for it -- then that act it becomes its own form of blissful high."

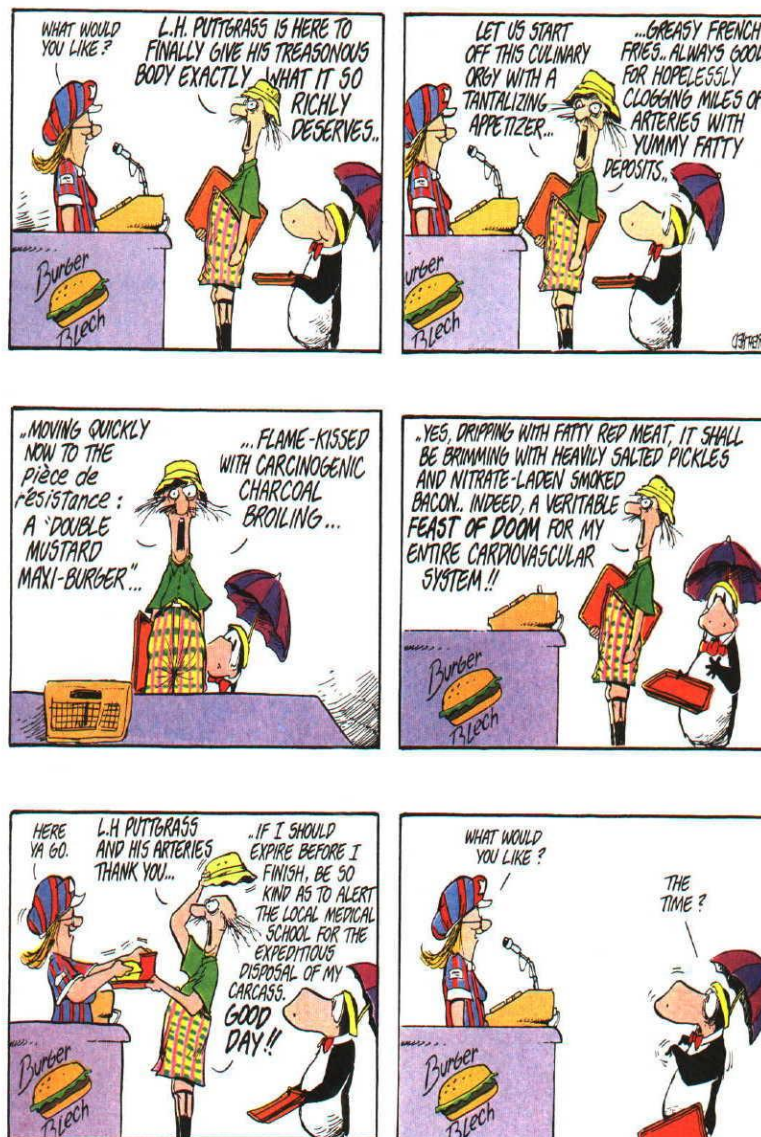
~ inspired by David Foster Wallace



Fleeing fast food (08/30/2014)

An easy & fast step towards self-LOVE ...
... is an easy & full step away from fast food.

“Must we timidly give in to the belief that every person is destined to relive his or her current torments; self-destructive evils which become all the more profound as they grow more comical with each hollow repetition? I think not! ... Yes, our fundamental nature mandates a gravitation towards ease & pleasure; this truth, one must admit. AND YET is this all we are? Is our sense of self-respect truly so brittle that we must remain chained to our disasters; watching helplessly as they repeat themselves like the drunkard who keeps feeding coins into the jukebox while repeatedly choosing the same, droning tune?” ~ inspired by Stanislaw Lem



Smoking-out Smoking (08/31/2014)

Smoking sucks -- *LITERALLY* ...

It sucks the courage from our moments ...



It sucks the money from our wallets ...



It sucks the health from our bodies ...



And it sucks the life from our loved ones.

And this last is what makes smoking so much “worse” than almost all other addictions combined -- for smoking is not only suicide; **smoking is murder**; most often the murder of the ones closest to us; most often the murder of the ones we care for the most.

Secondhand smoke contains most of the 69 cancer-causing compounds found in originally inhaled smoke. Even the EPA (a notorious friend to many large toxin-producing corporations) has classified secondhand smoke as a carcinogen since 1992. And a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke were 25 percent more likely to have coronary heart diseases compared to nonsmokers not so exposed.

And none of us want to do that -- none of us want to injure or harm or kill anyone around us, much less the ones we deeply cherish and adore. And in this regard, there is some very good news available for us all ...

Please consider:

*For non-smokers, you have the power to refuse to enable smokers to continue down their still-chosen path of death & destruction. And to do so, you don't have to convince them to quit, you simply have to have the courage to ask them to stop smoking in your presence – and to be sure to do so with gentle Compassion for *them*, much more than any concern or worry for yourself.

*For smokers, you have the power to let go of this insidious enemy. The good news for you is: YOU CAN QUIT! ... At the very least in this one moment, you do not have to light up. You do not have to burn holes in your wallets & your lungs & your Loved Ones ... And because you are allowed to keep repeating this Loving Choice, you don't have to cough any more -- or feel fidgety any more -- or worry any more -- or feel guilty any more -- or be out of breath any more -- or stink any more. And you won't have to ask non-smokers any more if it's OK for you to smoke ...

... because now you know that it never is.

Amen ... Let it be so.

*“Smoking kills.
And if you're killed,
you've lost a very important
part of your life.”
~ B. Shields*



Yes, we CAN (09/06/2014)

This is indeed a big & beautiful world we live in -- that ALL of us live in ... *together* ... as one big & Beauty-full sentient family ... *together* ... as one global community ... *together* ... as ONE.

And even though we may not be able to do much about what is happening to our cousins on the other side of the world, WE CAN most certainly do something about the sentient family members living in our own neighborhoods. And even though we may not have the money or the time to “make a big difference” there either, a positive difference WE CAN make -- probably a lot bigger difference than we give ourselves credit for.

And yet we can't make that difference while we sit around tables playing cards with our friends and complaining about the weather, and we sure as Hell (pun intended) can't make that difference while watching TV and complaining about the flagrant failings of our supposed “leaders”.

No, my Friends, the only way for us to actually make the difference that each & every one of us CAN indeed (in-deed!) make is to get up, get out there, and get started ... So go get 'em, tiger ... Get out there and pick up some garbage, ... or smile at some strangers, ... or sit down and share some food with some homeless folks, ... or deliver some cookies to the neighbor no one likes, ... or openly forgive the person who has harmed you the most, ... or volunteer at a local school of charity, ... or beautify a local park. Heck, get out there and do ALL those things -- or get out there and do some things “other”; whatever “other” it is that specifically you can do ... For it doesn't really matter what we do when you immerse ourselves in our communities, and yet it **DOES** in-deed matter very much that we do so.

Amen ... Let it be so!

“Each of us must rededicate ourselves to serving the common good in the ways we each can. We are a community. Our individual fates are linked and our futures are intertwined -- each & every one. And if we choose to start acting in that knowledge and in that spirit together, then we will indeed move mountains.” ~ inspired by Jimmy Carter

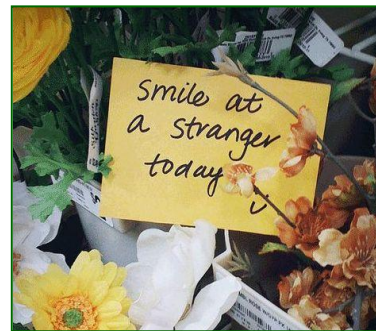




Winning the Ultimate Contest (09/07/2014)

Life gets pretty awesome once we realize that it's not a competition; once we realize that others are not opponents; that our enemies are not evil; that strangers are not at all strange ...

“He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings, and all beings in his own Self, and looks on everything with an impartial eye.” ~ Buddha



Becoming fully Human (09/09/2014)

Being fully human on this planet requires being willing to take a full step away from our individual heritage (and their personal comfort zones) to notice -- to truly and deeply and purely *notice* -- our world and ALL the people in it ... It does not mean noticing *your* world; It means noticing *the* world ... It means being calmly conscious of the fact that you -- and your friends, and your gender, and your race, and your religion, and your country -- are **not** the Center of the Universe ... It is instead the recognition that our Earth is made up of highly diverse people with remarkably similar needs -- remarkably similar fears, remarkably similar desires, remarkably similar responsibilities, and remarkably similar dreams ... To be fully human on this planet Earth is the willingness to openly & humbly & intimately connect with ALL the people you encounter each day -- indeed, with all our fellow sentient beings all over the world; fully realizing the patent Truth that the choices you make each day affect them directly, just as the choices they make directly affect you.

Being fully human is being fully awake ... It is noticing that ALL the residents of the entire world are your Family ... and then acting accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(inspired by Holly Sprink)

*“Beneath the armor of skin ... and bone ... and mind,
most of our colors are amazingly the same.” ~ Aberjhani*



Governing, our Selves (09/11/2014)

“The real danger we face is not from terrorism, but rather from what is being done under the pretext of fighting it.” ~ Michael Parenti

War in any form is not only inexcusable, it is patently counterproductive ... And yet we the people have been programmed to react aggressively anyway -- programmed to respond to aggression with aggression; programmed to respond to evil with “evils” of our own. And even though we the people *are* allowed to wake up and dismiss this cancerous delusion at any time we wish, our politicians, our government officials and our military “leaders” have no such excuse. Each & every one of them knows damn well (pun intended) that war never works -- that “self-defense” never brings real safety -- that violence cannot bring nonviolence -- that killing terrorists actually creates more terrorists -- that people made meek & pliable by the fear of being overrun from afar have already lost the far bigger battle both at home & within.

And yet I've got some really GOOD NEWS for all of you:

*Your real enemies are NOT the members of al-Qaida -- or the militants of ISIS -- or the soldiers of the Taliban -- or any other admittedly violent “terrorist cells” currently raising Hell in the world ... *Your real enemies are NOT “the damn Democrats” if you are a Republican or “those damn Republicans” if you are a Democrat ... *Your real enemies are NOT Muslims if you are a Christian or Christians if you are a Muslim ... *Your real enemies are NOT immigrant Mexicans if you are an unemployed Texan or immigrant Americans if you are an unemployed Canadian ... *And your real enemies are NOT “bleeding heart liberals” if you are conservative or “redneck conservatives” if you are liberal.

No, my dear Friends, your real enemies do not resemble any of these illusory threats ... Rather, your real enemies -- the ones who are indeed direly threatening the status of your livelihood and the quality of your health and the very viability of your freedom -- are the governmental officials you are still blindly trusting to “save you” (along with your own ego that is allowing them to so callously do just the opposite).

Well, it's time to wake up to a different Way, my dear ones ... It's time to take your Happiness back from the ones who given you only discontent ... It's time to take your Contentment back from the ones who have sold you only dis-ease ... It's time to take your Peace back from the ones who are still selling you war ... And it's time to take your Love back from the ones who are spreading only fear.

For **you** are the only ones who can repair your neighborhoods now ... **You** are the only one who can make your community alive & well again ... **You** and your neighbors are now the only ones who can fix what is broken and fortify what is not.

It's time for us all to stop watching the news, and to start tending community gardens instead ... It's time for us all to stop hiding behind polls and retreating to voting booths, and to start openly & actively caring for those in need instead ... And finally, it's time for us all to stop attending political rallies & supporting particular politicians or particular parties, and to start being the change we wish were seeing instead.

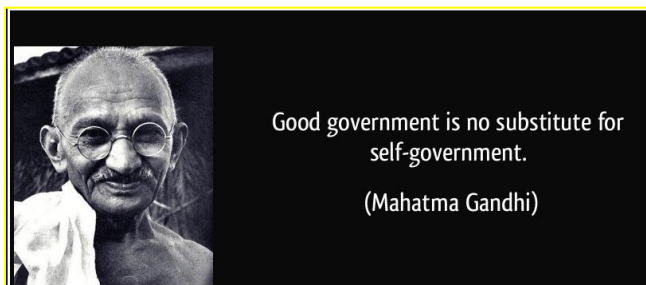
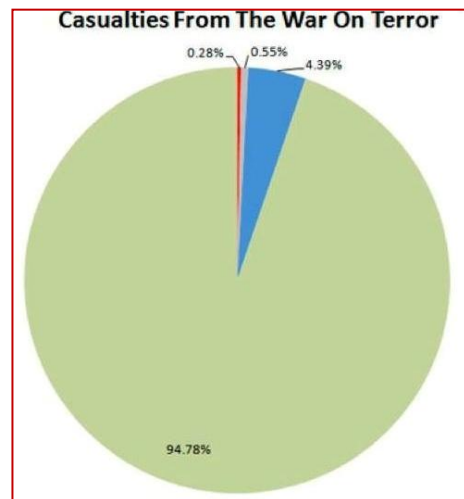
There is no politician currently alive who will make things one bit better for you or yours or your community or your world, my Friends ... for **YOU** are the leader you have been waiting for.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Our greatest duty to our children is to Love them with unconditional enthusiasm and affection. And our second duty is just as important -- if not a direct corollary of the first: namely, we must teach them to govern their own lives with compassion and kindness and justice -- and to resist all those who attempt to govern them otherwise. And we must do so not by frightening or forcing or intimidating our children into adhering to these principles, but rather by showing them the same -- by actively governing our own lives with the powers of Peace & Principle, so that our children might see our courageous caring and thereafter emulate that most noble example.”

~ inspired by Richelle Goodrich

R.I.P. to the 2,976 American people that lost their lives on 9/11 and R.I.P. to the 48,644 Afghan and 1,690,903 Iraqi people that paid the ultimate price for a crime they did not commit. And the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who experience this everyday.
Your 9/11 is their 24/7



A new Tradition (12/25/2014)

Here's an idea: How about starting a new family tradition this year? How about this morning, after you finish opening up your presents given to you from your current family members, how about you then heading out into your community and making that Family a little bit bigger?

Peace & Joy to you all, my Friends, today & evermore!

S, out ... **Love**, in

“If you must leave a place that you have lived in and loved and where all your yesteryears are buried deep, leave it any way except a slow way, leave it the fastest way you can. Never turn back, and never believe that an hour you remember is a better hour simply because it is dead, and therefore safe. It is true that passed years seem to be secure ones, and yet today they are nothing more than hollow foes vanquished, while the future ever lives high upon a daunting cloud, impenetrable and towering in the distance. Choose THIS moment instead ... Without any thought to then or yonder, start anew.” ~ inspired by Beryl Markham



One BIG family
(12/28/2014)

We are literally all members on one large Family, my Friends ... and it is high time we each started acting like it ... It is high time we started Caring for the poor in our neighborhoods ... It is high time we started reaching out to the homeless in our midst ... It is high time we started respecting animals like Brothers & Sisters ... And it is high time we started openly championing Peace instead of war, openly crusading for Love instead of judgment, and openly exhibiting Kindness instead of fear.

Indeed, if our species is to survive its imminent catastrophes & crises -- if we are to transcend our upcoming times of immense trial & turmoil, then this Great Change simply **MUST** come.

And if this Great Change is indeed to arrive in time,
... then it must begin today -- and it must begin **with YOU**.

Amen ... Let it be so.



“It is our privilege as men and women to proceed in our lives as though the limits of our abilities do not exist.” ~ Teilhard de Chardin

The Change *they* need to See (01/05/2015)

I don't know about the weather where you live, but it's pretty cold outside over here these days ... And I don't know about the culture in which you live, but after Christmas it can get pretty “cold” inside over here as well ...

The reason why I don't like Christmas celebrations is that they make it so easy for so many of us to put off doing the Right Thing until “the right time” ... Well, I've got news for you: We need not wait for “the giving season” to be Kind to others, because Giving to those in need is what **YOUR ENTIRE LIFE** is all about.

Yes, my Friends, Christmas has indeed come and gone, and the next “giving season” has come and gone right along with it. And yet I say screw that -- I say we get out there and *keep Giving anyway*.

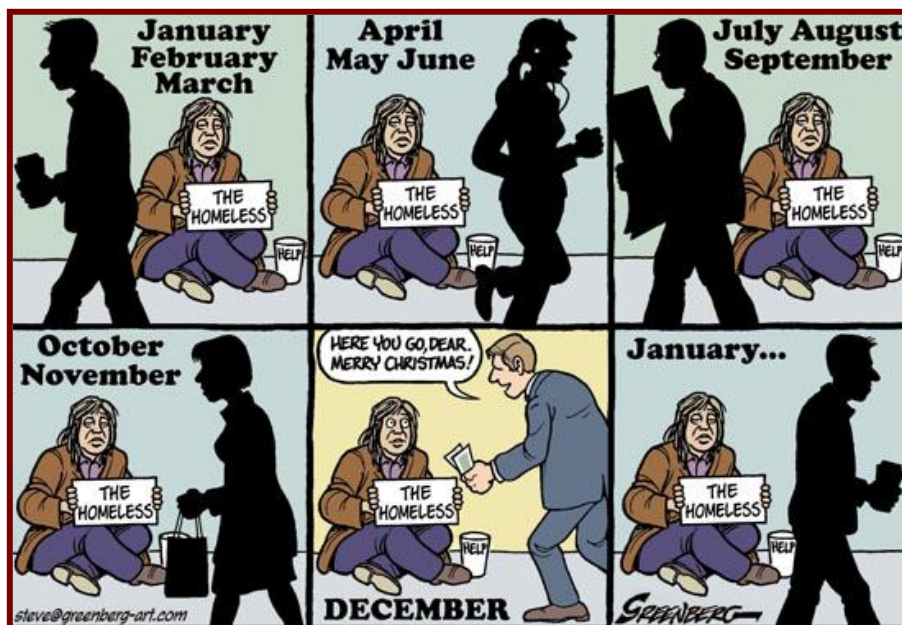
Now I admit that I have no idea to whom you can give in your neighborhood, nor do I have any idea how you can best do so ... and yet YOU DO. So -- even if only for today, let's go all go be the Change we so need to See.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.” ~ Charles Dickens

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” ~ Winston Churchill

“You give but little when you give of your possessions ... It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” ~ Kahlil Gibran



A real & true Faith
(01/07/2015)

OK, I'll admit that it IS pretty amazing that the current Pope has decided to courageously depart from the standard callousness & traditional hypocrisies of the Catholic church regarding poverty, war, and homophobia ... Of course, what I find even more amazing is that so many of us still need a Pope (or any other religious leader) to remind us of these things.

“For it is our hopes for personal blessings in this life, and then personal salvation in the next -- what some call 'faith' -- that bind & shackle any possibility of us showing a true Faith, a belief in the Divine made real solely by selfless acts of open-hearted gentleness given to our fellow beings.” ~ inspired by Alan Watts



Here is Pope Francis about to drop some sick rhymes ... The guy beatboxing behind him is the Italian President.

"P-Francis & the Prez" ...
... the news kings of rap.

Who would've ever thunk it?

A Tribute to Truth
(01/08/2015)

“The Animal Rights Movement lost four great and talented activists today with the murder of cartoonists John Cabut , Stéphane Charbonnier, Bernard Verlhac, and Georges Wolinski -- four of the 12 people who were killed recently in the horrific terrorist assault on *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris ...

Just yesterday *Charlie Hebdo* had contributed one of their cartoons to the activist organization L214 which campaigns in France for animal rights ... *Charlie Hebdo* is also the only French newspapers to clearly condemn bullfights, the enslavement of dolphins, and big game hunting. The magazine also ran a weekly animal rights cartoon ...

Knowing the French, I doubt they will now let *Charlie Hebdo* die. If anything freedom of expression will be stronger. Freedom must never submit to the tyranny of fanatical religious intolerance ... These were brave, talented and beloved people whose deaths will not be accepted meekly or quietly.”

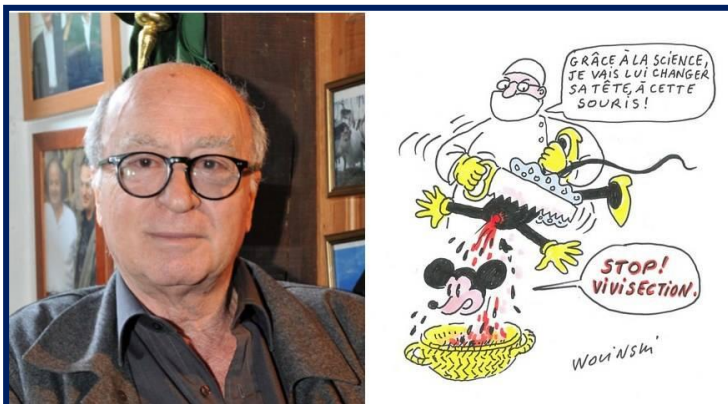
~ inspired by Paul Watson

Condemning ignorance entrenches the hatred that spawns it, while ignoring ignorance allows its vitriol to live on unchecked ... Neither are effective solutions to the evil that is violent intolerance.

No, my Friends, we must have the courage to fight their fire with water & extinguish their heat with coolness. Though they would have us become too scared to act, we must now more than ever courageously oppose not only all forms of aggression, but all forms of bigotry as well ... And we must do so while exuding Compassion for the ignorance of those that propagate the same.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"A religion that comes of thought, and study, and deliberate conviction, sticks best. The revitalized convert who is scared in the direction of heaven because he sees hell yawn suddenly behind him, not only regains confidence when his scare is over, but is ashamed of himself for being scared, and often becomes more hopelessly and malignantly wicked than he was before." ~ Mark Twain



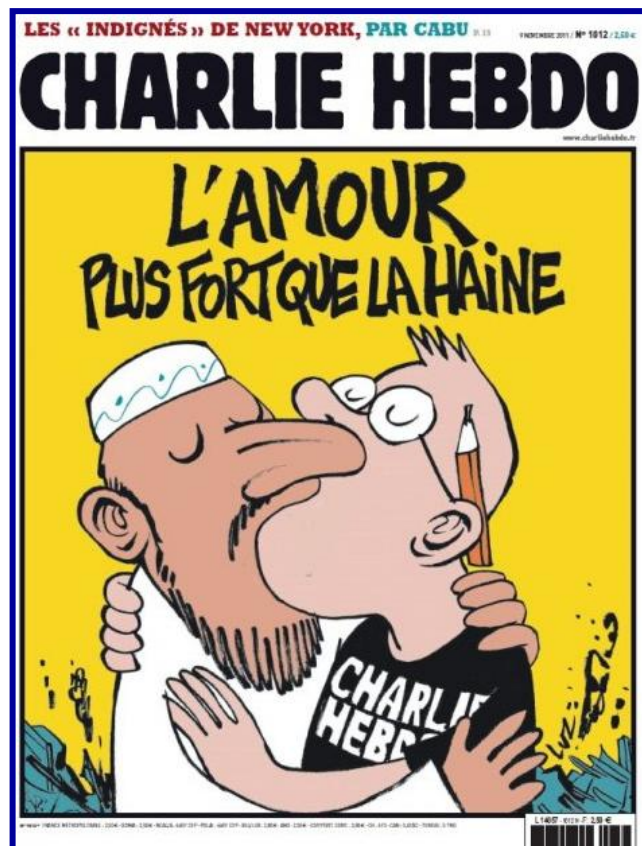
P.S Feel free to post similar cartoons in honor of the fallen.

Stronger than hate (01/08/2015)

Ten journalists at *Charlie Hebdo*'s offices in Paris were assassinated yesterday. The perpetrators are apparently Muslim extremists ... *Charlie Hebdo* is a French weekly satirical magazine that has long been harassed by conservative Muslims for making Islam and Mohammed the targets of its jokes. Indeed, in November of 2011, the magazine's offices were fire-bombed after it published a special edition, supposedly guest-edited by the prophet Muhammad and temporarily renamed "Charia Hebdo". The cover was a cartoon of Muhammad threatening the readers with "a hundred lashes if you don't die laughing". The petrol bomb attack completely destroyed the Paris offices, the magazine's website was hacked and staff were also subjected to death threats.

But that did not deter the magazine ... Just six days later, the magazine published a front page depicting a male *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonist passionately kissing a bearded Muslim man in front of the charred aftermath of the bombing. The headline read: "L'Amour plus fort que la haine" -- Love is stronger than hate.

Amen, Charlie Hebdo ... Thank you for your courage to stand up against the forces of bigotry & oppression & fear & violence ... Thank you for having the courage to stand up for equality and freedom and justice ... And thank you for showing us how to have the courage to act similarly -- how we can all choose to BE the change we all need see.



Je suis Charlie
(01/09/2015)

I've been reading a lot of comments and articles about the recent *Charlie Hebdo* tragedy in Paris, and one of the more common statements made claims that the journalists somehow “had it coming” -- that their cartoons were so “over the top” that they should have expected violent retribution of some sort; even their own deaths ... Well I stand before you today and say such commentary is absolutely PREPOSTEROUS!

Yes, the cartoons were “over the top” -- yes, some of them even I found offensive -- and yes, it might have even been reasonable for their publishers to know that violent reprisals would indeed come from the Muslim community. **And yet** these facts IN NO WAY excuse that violence!

If I happen to mention the fact that the Koran is indeed a book filled with immoral mandates of oppression & violence, then you as a Muslim might very well be offended, and you would have every right to protest my opinion. You could sit with me and discuss the more peaceful contents of your holy book ... You could also publicly damn me to eternal Hell at the hands of your supposedly “just and caring” Allah ... You could openly ridicule my “ignorance” ... You could even refuse to have anything more to do with me – boycotting not only my person but also my writings and any business with which I might be affiliated.

Indeed, you could express your indignation in any number of non-violent ways, AND YET what you most certainly could **NOT** morally do is attack me physically -- or accost or harm my friends -- or bomb my home or place of employ -- or attempt to murder me or have me killed ... All such violent options are per se unjustified and patently unjustifiable. Indeed, they are all directly violative of everything it means to be a decent & civilized human being, and as such are fully unacceptable responses to your personal feelings of disgust or disdain or insult or indignation ... For even though these were the responses we carried out in our species' embarrassingly primitive past -- they are most certainly **NOT** the ones we are to choose in our (one would hope) far more enlightened present.

And so I stand with *Charlie Hebdo* today ... Even though I do not personally agree with the extremeness of many of their expressions, I **do** wholeheartedly support their right to express themselves however they wish. I am not required to read their more caustic words and I can very easily look away from their more garish images. I can peacefully protest what offends me openly & firmly if I wish, and yet I most certainly can**NOT** and will not justify violence as an acceptable response thereto ... As a moral man, I simply cannot do so -- and neither can any Muslim -- and this, no matter how devout he or she might be.

There is absolutely **no excuse** for barbarism, my Friends ... and this is true even for those overly provocative folks who “have it coming”.

In conclusion, then, if you are a Muslim who believes that Allah is truly so insecure as to condone horrific violence in response to mere acts of “blasphemy”, then it is high-time you question your allegiance to such a cruel & ruthless godhead ... And in conclusion, if you are a Muslim who truly believes that Islam is and can become a religion of Peace, then it is time for **YOU** to stand up and loudly protest the fanatical minority in your own religion's midst ... And in conclusion, if we non-Muslims hope to make any headway in our battle with the dangerously dogmatic, we must remember to do so with compassion and with calm. For it does no good whatsoever to respond to violence with violence, nor will it help to respond to hatred with hate.

My Friends, there is only one hope when it comes to stemming the rising tide of Muslim terror, and that is to openly condemn the violence while openly forgiving its perpetrators; by reaching out ahead of the next attack to our the Muslim brothers & sisters in our communities -- in the hopes that they will then be inspired to enlighten the ignorance of their more backward-thinking & aggressive-acting fellow believers.

Gandhi was right: there is no way to Peace, for Peace is the only Way ... I pray that you will join me today in actively re-remembering this Truth.

Thank you.

“Islam makes very large claims for itself, purporting as it does to be the last and final word of God -- along with expressing an open ambition to become the world’s only religion. Some of its adherents advocate the practice of plural marriage, forced marriage, female circumcision, compulsory veiling of women, and censorship of non-Muslim magazines and media. Islam’s teachings, depending on context, can be held to exhibit a very strong dislike of other religions, as well as of heretical forms of Islam -- often demanding the termination of the same. The prohibition on picturing the prophet Muhammad – who was nothing more than a male mammal – is apparently absolute ... Very well then, let any good Muslim abstain rigorously from all these if he wishes, and yet once he claims the right to force me to abstain as well, he offers the clearest possible proof of an aggressively immoral intent.” ~ inspired by Christopher Hitchens



“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only Love can do that.”

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Well played, Charlie
(01/14/2015)

Success is not what we have been taught or what we have been told ... It has nothing to do with how much money we earn or how much influence we gain or how much fame we reap, and it has nothing to do with how long we live or how much fun we have or even how healthy we are.

No, my Friends, there is a far deeper Truth as to what it means to be Successful in this priceless life we have all been given -- a Truth that each & every one of us will most certainly realize at the latest on our deathbeds -- and a Truth that we are all allowed to realize far earlier than that if we so choose.

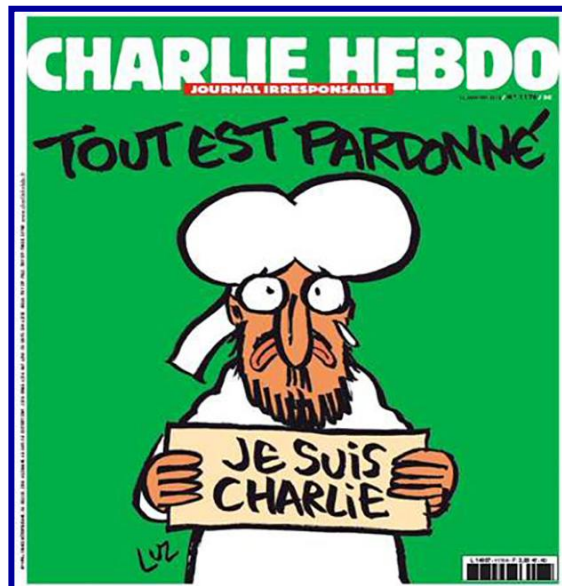
And this awakening to real Success requires that we break free of our conditionings & indoctrinations long enough to redefine what Success means in our lives -- to make the truly victorious life about serving others instead of being served by them; about liberating others from suffering instead of immersing ourselves in mere happiness or fleeting pleasures; about extending ourselves beyond what is comfortable instead of accumulating instants of comfort & ease.

No, my Friends, for our lives to become truly Success-full, our days must reflect Compassion instead of callousness, they must be grounded in Caring instead of convenience, and they must be grounded in conscience over culture.

And so it is that I wish each & every one of you a most Success-full day today ... May you have the willingness to examine this new way, may you have the Humility to appreciate it ... and may you have the Courage to make it come alive.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Integrity is the essence of everything successful.”
~ Buckminster Fuller



a Peace-full Perspective

(01/10/2015)

Now, in response to what I and others have written about last Tuesday's despicable attack on the employees of the French satirist magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, I'm reading more & more comments (mostly from Christians) generally denouncing Islam as a religion of “violent criminals”, “immoral maniacs” & “vile demons” ... Well, I myself have yet to read the Koran, and as such will reserve my personal opinion on the overall nature of Islam until I become at least a little bit better informed (something I would recommend that **everyone** else do as well) ... And yet what I *can* offer is a calm & non-judgmental reminder for all Christians about the quite violent & fairly sordid history of their own religion ... What I *can* do is remind those who would condemn Muslims that Jesus himself told us all (believers & non-believers alike) to remove the beams from our own eyes before attempting to remove the splinters from others ... What I *can* do is remind us all that it is not advisable to criticize another's religion when followers of our own particular faiths have done far worse in our own religion's younger days.

Now I have indeed read a bit of the Koran, and I can freely admit that what I have read so far **is** indeed heavily sprinkled with stern words that favor judgment & violence & condemnation & intolerance -- AND YET it is also important to note that these words are only marginally more aggressive & only slightly more “backward” than many passages of the Christian Bible with which we are familiar.

Islam is still a relatively young religion, my Friends, and therefore it is still a relatively aggressive religion ... And while the theological youth of a faith & the unsophistication of that infant faith's followers are never valid excuses for violent beliefs or evil deeds, we would all -- especially Christians -- do well to remember that radical followers of Christianity actually committed FAR WORSE atrocities in the names of their prophets back when their religion was in a similar stage of “development” (e.g. the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, the Catholic church's active support of Hitler in WWII etc etc etc).

In fact, Christians would do well to humbly remember that -- even though Christian believers are for the most part not currently engaging in actions of direct violence against the innocent (though there are still a few horrific exceptions in parts of Africa – and the Westboro Baptist Church & abortion clinic bombings in the U.S. also come to mind), the fundamental Christian dogma **is** both exclusive & condemnatory of all “heathen” non-believers -- and therefore quite hateful itself. In fact, it is more than fair to say that Jesus himself would no doubt stand forth and sternly denounce the bigoted “Paulinist” perversions of his teachings were he alive and among us today ... And yet there can be little debate that the Christian church is founded upon such judgmental “values” regardless, and there can be little argument that the modern-day Christian church spews words of intolerance & judgment from the majority of its pulpits to this day.

Now let me be clear: what the radical minority of violent Muslims are doing in the name of Allah is repulsive and should definitely be sternly yet peacefully condemned ... AND let me be equally clear: Christians would do well to remember that their own active worship of a God who is allowing billions of innocent Souls to burn forever in Hell (for the simple “crime” of choosing to worship the wrong godhead) is nothing less than a similar act of unjust violence.

When I read the Bible (which I have dedicated a sizable portion of the last ten years of my life to doing), it becomes quite clear that Jesus was more fond of humility than any other virtue (with the possible exception of radical acts of Kindness, of course) ... And when I think about Jesus' words with any semblance of calm objectivity, I also remember that he went so far as to openly note that NO ONE would ever enter his Kingdom of Heaven without first becoming “humble as a child” ... My Friends, judging others to be “criminal” or “insane” or “demonic” most certainly does **NOT** satisfy this commandment, and as such, it would be wise for all Christians making such statements &/or holding similar beliefs to recant those words and set aside those ideals -- to have the humility to admit that the vehemence with which you are judging a minority of deluded Muslims is possibly better directed at yourselves -- and to then courageously reaffirm and exemplify the Love unconditional for which your own Lord & Savior lived and died.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: all organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience.” ~ Christopher Hitchens

“Satan has been out of a job years ago ... We are doing his work for him.” ~ Dan Lewis (United Methodist pastor)



*“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”
~ Jesus Christ
(Matthew 18:3-4)*

Responding to injustice (01/16/2015)

Our politicians tax us illegally, they destroy our environment, and they murder the innocent (both abroad with drones and at home with Monsanto-developed “food”) ... and then, after all that is said & done, they vote themselves raises.

Our preachers turn Joy-full teachings of peaceful Masters into dour dogma; condemning all non-believers and demanding allegiance to THEIR version of God and THEIR interpretations of Scripture ... and thereby sin even more heavily themselves.

Our police roam the streets sworn to “protect and serve” -- and yet regularly harass those of different creed or color, regularly prosecute those trying to feed the homeless (or beautify their neighborhoods, or grow our own sustenance, or protest peacefully), and regularly send the innocent to prison just to conveniently “close cases” ... and yet they demand reverence & respect for their authority.

We are truly inundated with injustice & corruption, my Friends ... so **REBEL** against it however you are able; remembering as you do so that even the smallest act of peaceful protest makes the world a better place and that one of the most powerful acts of peaceful protest is the open act of **Forgiveness**.

Indeed, remember that fighting against injustice doesn't encourage the corrupt to become just; it actually persuades them to become more stealthy in their corruption ... that attacking evil doesn't encourage the aggressive to become peaceful; but actually persuades them to become more insidious with their acts of aggression.

My Friends, to shatter what is wrong, we cannot respond in ways that echo that wrongness ... No, to transform any wrong we must stand forth with courage -- AND we must have the courage to do so in ways that are Right.

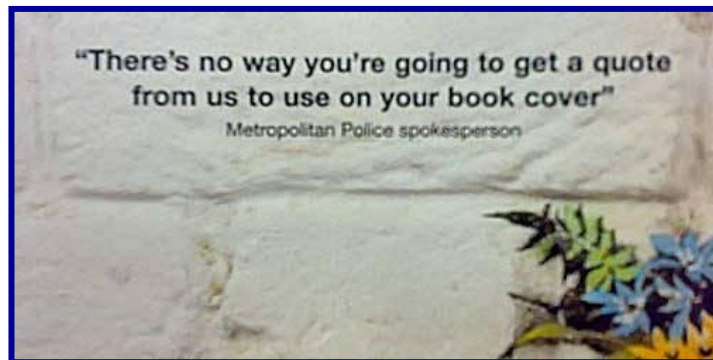
*So today we stand before our politicians and forgive them their transgressions ... and then we abandon politics completely in favor of rebuilding our own communities ourselves.

*So today we stand before our preachers and forgive them their flagrant arrogance & pious condemnations ... and then we abandon religion completely in favor of BECOMING the caring hands of God ourselves.

*So today we stand before our police officers, judges, and prosecuting attorneys and forgive them their callousness and their hypocrisies ... and then we abandon bowing to external authority in favor of living a bold life filled with radical acts of Love.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“If thy brother wrongs thee, remember not so much his wrong-doing, but more than ever that he is thy brother.” ~ Epictetus



"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." ~ Elie Wiesel

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, you must build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." ~ Buckminster Fuller

Answering the Call (02/21/2015)

Well, here we are in early 2015, and the 2016 campaign tactics are already in full swing. Yes, they might be thinly disguised as unjust acts of war or vapid arguments over domestic policies that will inevitably bear no fruit, and yet these are the mere precursors to the mass-charade that is election-year politics in the United States of America ... How shameful it remains that at a time when your supposed “leaders” (regardless of their party affiliation) should be striving to help make your communities thrive and your lives better, they are instead working around the clock to ensure their own continued lives of sloth & ease.

Well, even though there is nothing you can do so stop this onslaught of selfishness or prevent such flagrant greed-grabs, you are not completely helpless in this matter. **You CAN** respond effectively to their corruption -- by not responding at all.

Yes, my Friends, it is high-time you stopped enabling politicians in undermining your life, in embarrassing your country, and indeed in destroying your planet. It is high-time you showed them exactly what you think of them -- by ignoring them completely. It is high-time you showed them exactly what they are currently worth to you & yours -- namely, absolutely NOTHING.

Amen ... Let it finally be so.

“American democracy has become a business plan, with a clear bottom line for every person's activity, every citizen's dream, every voter's hope. Both primary parties are now devoted to exactly the same economic policies -- gentle socialism for the rich and brutal capitalism for the poor -- and the same foreign policy of servility to endless war. This is not democracy ... America is to politics what McDonalds is to food.” ~ inspired by John Pilger



The Silent Departure (02/22/2015)

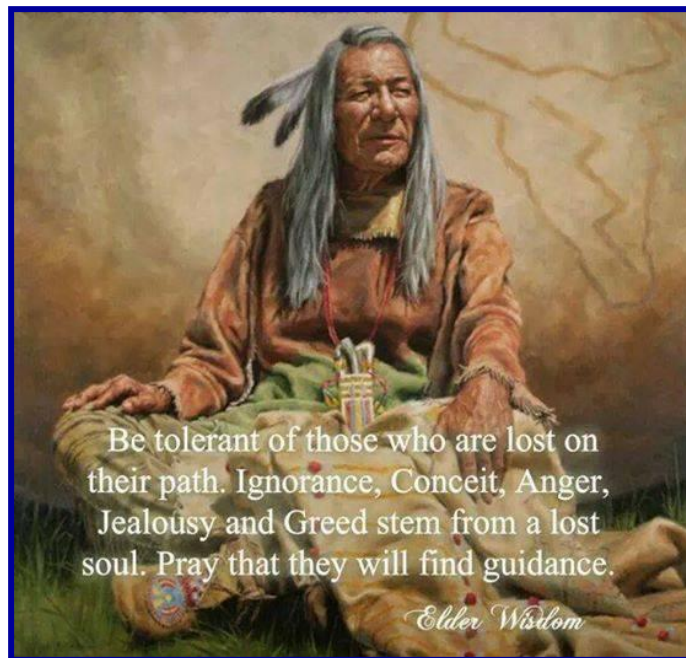
The time has come for Americans to engage the only form of revolution that will ever work -- a revolution of Silent Departure. In the instances where the “authorities” are openly trampling the rights of the oppressed, we must silently depart with active & peaceful protest ... In the instances where the wealthy are robbing the poor, we must silently depart by giving to those in need ... In the instances where the government is subtly & pervasively leeching money & power & energy & time & fear from its people, we must silently depart by openly & consciously ignoring every one of their fear-filled mandates “from above” -- and by openly & consciously using our money & our power & our energy & our time to rebuild our communities from within.

Our “leaders” have lost their way, my Friends ... They are headed over a cliff and are determined to drag us over the edge with them. Forgive them their hubris and their ignorance and their callousness as they do so. Forgive them and send them compassion and wish them well on their journey into oblivion -- and then silently slip away to start living a new life; a new life free from all their broken promises and empty regulations and hollow rhetoric; a new life completely filled with selfless service, intimate caring, profound joy, deep-seated peace & awe-inspired wonderment.

Indeed, a beautiful future is waiting for you & yours, no matter what “they” say to the contrary. The courage to step away and seize that future is all that remains ... I wish for you that Courage ... **Peace.**

kleptocracy · *noun*

... a form of political and government corruption where the government exists to increase the personal wealth and political power of its officials and the ruling class at the expense of the wider population.



The Truth about war
(03/04/2015)

The TRUTH: Whether you want to believe it or not, the current U.S. attacks against ISIS and other terrorists in the Middle East are **NOT** designed to protect the safety of you or your loved ones -- indeed, they are actually making the world a far more dangerous place for us all.

The TRUTH: Whether you want to believe it or not, the current U.S. attacks against ISIS and other terrorists in the Middle East are **NOT** intended to “bring democracy” to that region, but are rather quite obviously designed to keep it as unstable – and therefore as undemocratic – as possible.

The TRUTH: Whether you want to believe it or not, the current U.S. attacks against ISIS and other terrorist in the Middle East are **NOT** being done to protect America, but are rather being undertaken to ensure the continued wealth of the very few via the immense suffering of the very many.

The TRUTH: Whether you want to believe it or not, my Friends, you are being lied to – you are being lied to about Israel, you are being lied to about Palestine, you are being lied to about the War on Terror, and you are being lied to about ISIS. Indeed -- you are being lied to about every single facet of U.S. foreign policy.

And yet there is still some Good News to report – and that good news is this: you are **NOT** required to believe those lies, and you are **NOT** required to in any way participate in -- or in any way support -- their evil objectives.

My Friends, the Truth is right there for you to see whenever you wish. All you have to do is open your eyes and take a look ...

Please do so today ... *Thank you.*





Escaping the prison of politics (04/09/2015)

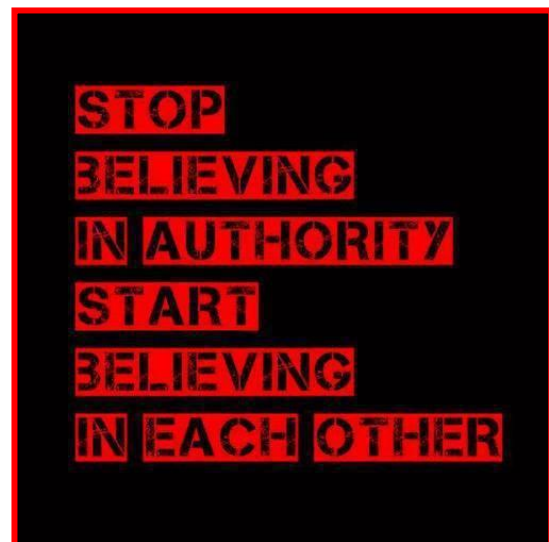
It's truly tragic how so many of us still confine ourselves to prisons of our own making, even while a life full of Freedom remains ready & waiting ... And yet before we can choose to live a life of real & vibrant Liberty, we must first remove all our self-imposed shackles -- we must distance ourselves from all our dogmas, and we must disassociate ourselves from all our blind allegiances ... In essence, before we can know lives of real vitality, we must free ourselves from all our political affiliations.

Now it is true that the prison of politics is indeed a refuge that provides us with powerful feelings of solace & security, and yet as much as it seems to keep us "safe", it also prevents us from truly living our lives -- it tempts us from serving others in our neighborhoods with courage & power; it cajoles us away from loving others in our lives with depth & intimacy; and it in effect prevents us from caring for our communities with verve & virtue.

Yes, it is also true that the alternative life is indeed quite risky -- that it is "dangerous" & terrifying & even "irresponsible" to believe that we can venture forth and be the change we wish to see; the change we have waited so long for our "leaders" & our politicians to manifest & manage ... And yet it is this very leap of faith that gives Life its true Meaning, and as such it is this very leap that becomes the only Life worth living.

In closing then, my Friends, we have been bound by the chains of hollow promises & reed-thin rhetoric long enough. It is high-time for us all to abandon our prison cells of party politics ... and choose a life of real Freedom instead!

"It is difficult to free people from the chains they revere." ~ Voltaire



Answering the Call (04/11/2015)

My Friends, we have not been called to judge the homeless or criticize the downtrodden or turn a deaf ear to the cries of the poor ... True enough, it is indeed possible that some of my homeless compatriots **do** qualify as “lazy bums”; and maybe some of them **are** “getting what they deserve”; and maybe more than a few of them **are** alcoholics & drug addicts: and maybe a handful of them **are** indeed “scumbag con-artists” ... And yet, when it gets right down to it, none of those things matter the least little bit -- none of these labels are valid reasons for denying these people a moment of basic decency or a few minutes of Kindness.

Indeed, it doesn't matter one bit that my dear Friend David has given up on trying to find work -- and it doesn't matter one bit that my dear Friend Mary fell “deservedly” on hard times after committing a number of mistakes that caused others great pain -- and it doesn't matter one bit that my dear Friend Joseph is indeed addicted to beer and pain-killers -- and it doesn't matter one bit that my dear Friend Paul isn't homeless at all, but still chooses to debase himself by sitting in dirty clothes just to get some “easy cash”.

No, my dear Friends who are still blessed with homes of your own, none of these are valid reasons for doing the one thing we have each been Called to do in this all-too-short life we have each been given -- namely, to reach out to ALL those who are down and extend a helping hand; to reach out to ALL those who feel invisible to let them know that they are Seen; to reach out to ALL those who are unloved to touch them on the shoulder, look them in the eyes, and let them know that we truly Care.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Many Paths – One Mountain

(04/11/2015)

“Each and every master, regardless of the era of his teaching or the place of her awakening, heard the Call and attained a perfect harmony with Heaven & Earth. Each and every one of them discovered that, even though there are many paths leading to the top of the Mountain, there is only one summit ... and that this summit is pure Love -- unadulterated, unconditional & selfless.”

~ inspired by Morihei Ueshiba

Living life solely for our own personal pleasure or even primarily for the benefit of our own friends has us forever circling the base of life's one & only Mountain, and this is not necessarily a “bad thing” ... Yes, this path through the shadows is covered with jagged rocks and loose sands, and yet it too has its fleeting beauties -- it too provides glimpses of Peace. Of course, no matter how long we choose to remain in that valley, we cannot help but glance every now & then up at the Peak ever before us – and we cannot help but yearn to climb towards its shining Light.

And at some point or another in our lives, every one of us will indeed leave this “low road” and make our way upward towards the brilliant freshness of that Summit ... And as we do so, we discover that there are indeed many trails that lead up that Mountainside.

There is the path of external “self-help” (i.e. releasing our addictions by choosing new behaviors – “eating right”, sleeping well, exercising regularly, etc) ... We do so in order to “be healthier” or “live longer” or “feel better” for ourselves, and as such, this is a way that winds very slowly towards the top and takes many, many years before we even get close thereto.

Then there is the path of internal “self-discipline” (i.e. releasing our addictions by “going within” -- via meditation, prayer, yoga, Tai Chi, visualization, etc) ... We do so to find “inner peace” or “enlightenment” for ourselves, and as such, this is a way that doesn't quite make it to the top either. It does indeed illuminate the smooth & flowing way to the Summit, and yet it is not a walking way. Even though it allows us to See the top of the Mountain -- and sometimes even to sense what the Summit offers, we must still someday set forth and actually do the walking to get there.

And finally, there is The Way of joyful self-sacrifice (i.e. letting our addictions go by replacing them with acts of radical Kindness instead) ... And this is the Path that allows the walker to reach the Summit right away ... This is the Path that allows the walker to realize that the Summit has been within each step all along.

*“The winds of Grace are always blowing ...
Have the courage to open your sails.”*

~ Nipun Mehta



Revolutionizing Revolution (04/28/2015)

I was going to write something “deep & insightful” today about the Baltimore riots – something about how the focus should be less on the vandalism perpetrated by the protestors and more about the many years of political violence that ultimately inspired the same; something about how the response to such repugnant elitism should not be further acts of violent destruction, but rather forceful acts of radically disobedient **Peace** --- and yet for now I think I’ll allow the following short & poignant paragraphs to suffice.

“I agree with your point that the principle of peaceful, non-violent protest and the observance of the rule of law is of utmost importance in any society. MLK, Gandhi, Mandela, and all great opposition leaders throughout history have always preached this precept. Further, it is critical that in any democracy investigation must be completed and due process must be honored before any government or police members are judged responsible.

That said, my greater source of personal concern, outrage and sympathy beyond this particular case is focused neither upon one night’s property damage nor upon the acts [of violence], but is focused rather upon the past four-decade period during which an American political elite have shipped middle class and working class jobs away from Baltimore and cities and towns around the U.S. to third-world dictatorships like China and others, plunged tens of millions of good hard-working Americans into economic devastation, and then followed that action around the nation by diminishing every American’s civil rights protections in order to control an unfairly impoverished population living under an ever-declining standard of living and suffering at the butt end of an ever-more militarized and aggressive surveillance state ...

We need to keep in mind people are suffering and dying around the U.S., and while we are thankful no one was injured at Camden Yards, there is a far bigger picture for poor Americans in Baltimore and everywhere who don’t have jobs and are losing their economic, civil and legal rights, and this makes inconvenience at a ball game irrelevant in light of the needless suffering our government is inflicting upon ordinary Americans."

~ John P. Angelos (the Executive Vice President of the Baltimore Orioles and son of majority team owner Peter Angelos, giving an eye-opening statement in response to Orioles sportscaster Brett Hollander’s critique of the Freddie Gray demonstrations)



Becoming un-Bamboozled (05/19/2015)

I know I'm tackling this issue a bit early, and yet I figure it's better to address it now -- before you poor Americans get fully inundated by the election-frenzy that will very soon begin to invade your lives ... And all I really need to say is this: **Your vote no longer counts**, if for no other reason than the men and women who are supposedly campaigning for that vote have already themselves "voted" ...

They have "voted" for their own power ...
They have "voted" for their own comfort ...
They have "voted" for their own success ...
& they have "voted" for their own wealth.

Now I know it will be *very* tempting for you to keep attaching your hopes for a better future on the next smooth-talking criminal who will say all the right things and make all the right promises -- and I know it will be *very* tempting for you to remain locked into the political choices of your past; the sacred-yet-hollow ideologies that have been hammered into your brain since your youth.

And yet you do NOT have to keep playing *their* game, my Friends ... Just as you are not required to continue making the same mistakes over & over & over again in your own private lives, so too are you not required to vote for the next "new face" -- a new face who will simply transform into the next version of his or her corrupt predecessor once he or she is elected.

In essence, my American Friends -- it is time for you to **AWAKEN!** Your country was indeed founded on the glorious principle of freedom, and yet you are no longer free ... Your country was indeed founded on the profound principle of Truth, and yet you are being fed a steady stream of lies ... Your country was indeed founded on the brilliant hope of democracy, and yet that hope has crumbled, and an insidious greed-based oligarchy is all that remains.

Please **wake up** and see that it is indeed so ...
... and then please start acting accordingly.

Thank you.

"One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken." ~ Carl Sagan



POLITICIANS
have nothing to do with people

In the Flow
(05/18/2015)

When your tempo is relaxed -- when you are choosing to simply Accept everything that IS, then every place becomes sacred ... And when your gait becomes powerful therein. When you are simply striding into each moment looking only to comfort those in despair or to serve those in need, then every meeting becomes an encounter with God.

My Friends, no matter what your station in life and no matter what the weather of your day, know that somewhere nearby there is always at least one Soul soaked in a storm of sadness ... Go now and look for that Soul.

Look for that Soul -- Find that Soul -- Reach out to that Soul ... and then Be the One who brings back the Sun.

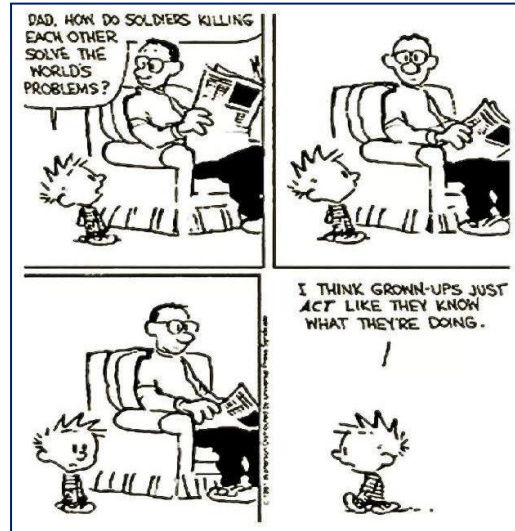
Consider this carefully ...
... and then enact it **Care**-fully.

Thank you.



A Glimmer of Peace (05/21/2015)

“All wars are essentially civil wars, because all men are in truth brothers -- and all women, sisters ... Each & every person owes infinitely more to the human race as a whole than to the particular country in which he or she was born. As such, each & every one of us carries the hope for a brighter future into each new day -- for each & every one of us carries within us the glimmering possibility for Peace.” ~ inspired by Francois Fenelon



Building life anew (05/23/2015)

It doesn't matter the district or the region or the state in which you live – and it doesn't matter to which political party you have in the past pledged your allegiance ... Corruption has thoroughly infested America -- a country where democracy has truly died and a land where the only thing “leaders” govern is their own personal comfort & their own political longevity. My American Friends, your country has been sold out to corporations & their political puppets, and your future votes have already been pre-purchased by the greedy, insidious oligarchy they have already co-created.

I love you all dearly, and I truly feel for your pain -- both the pain that comes from having your delusions shattered (what is happening for hundreds of thousands of you now), as well as the pain that inevitably comes every time tyrants leave their velvet-cushioned closets to openly raise their sabres of oppression (what is going to happen in the United States far sooner than you might think).

As such, I say this with all the compassion and all the caring -- and indeed all the urgency -- that I can muster:

Get away from the oligarchy's clutches now, while the getting is still Good.

“The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to prevailing superstitions and taboos. And when he does so, he inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is brutally dishonest, morally intolerable and indeed almost clinically insane. In the beginning, while he remains still romantically patriotic, he tries to repair what is broken. And yet once he sees that there can no longer be any change 'from above', he leaves his festering country behind and builds his life anew.” ~ inspired by H. L. Mencken



Re-membering Memorial Day – Part 1
... Awakening to Truth
(05/25/2015)

For those who might not know, today is Memorial Day -- a federal holiday in the United States for remembering the people who died while serving in that country's armed forces ... Well, seeing as how the only way to truly honor anyone is to speak Truth, I thought I would pay homage to all the American men & women who have died in combat by offering up a dose of the same ...

As such, today I humbly honor those fallen with the following:

*To all those who have relatives who died in any past or current U.S. military conflict, please know that your loved ones -- while certainly courageous and quite possibly nobly intended -- most certainly did **NOT** die to “protect Americans” or “defend freedom” or “support democracy” ... It may *seem* like that was the case, and the American government certainly *told* you that was the case, and you may even want to *believe* that was the case ... **and yet** the case it most certainly was not. In truth of fact, your loved ones died so that the United States could maintain military & economic supremacy over the rest of the world, and your loved ones died so that the wealthy few in the United States could continue to enjoy their lives of comfort & luxury -- period.

*To all those who have relatives who died in any past or current U.S. military conflict, please know that the wars in which they perished -- Korea in the 50's, Vietnam in the 60's, Laos & Chile & Angola in the 70's, El Salvador & Nicaragua & Grenada in the 80's, Kuwait & Somalia & Haiti in the 90's, and Iraq & Pakistan & Afghanistan ever since -- have **NOT** brought the world more Peace, have **NOT** brought the world more stability, and have **NOT** brought the world more justice. Indeed, *JUST THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE* ... Instead, their acts of aggression have begotten more aggression; their acts of violence have begotten more violence; their acts of terror have begotten more terrorism; and their wars have begotten more war.

*And finally, to all those who have relatives who died in any past or current U.S. military conflict, please know that **you can help STOP THIS MADNESS** ... Know that you can truly honor your fallen loved ones by refusing to go to war yourself .. Know that you can truly honor your fallen loved ones by publicly protesting for peace in your community ... Know that you can truly honor your fallen loved ones by becoming an advocate for compassion in your neighborhood ... Know that you can truly honor your fallen loved ones by becoming a champion of Loving Forgiveness -- both at home, and abroad.

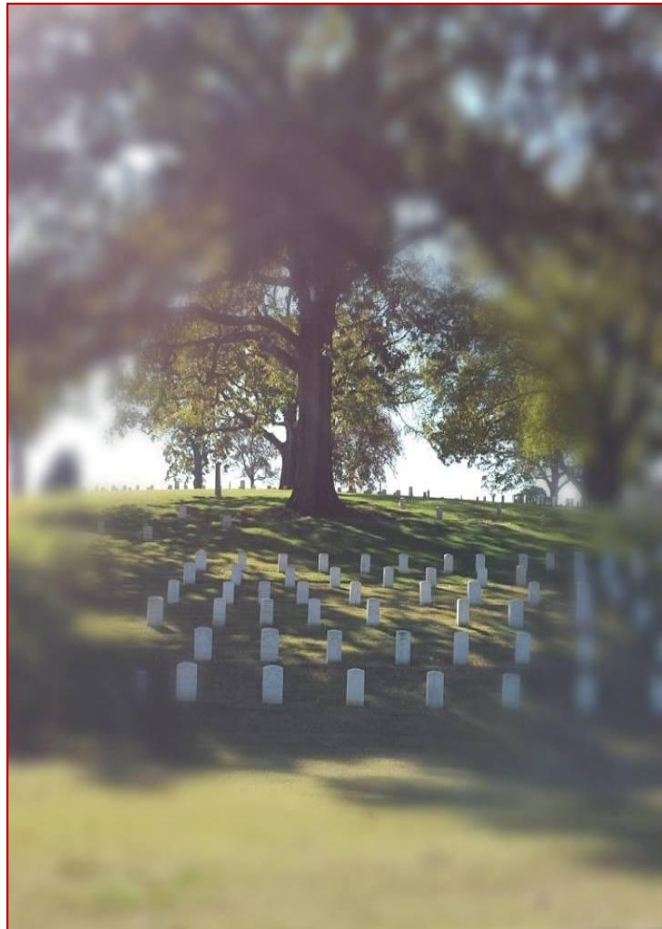
My dear Friends, don't let the patriotic indoctrinations of your childhood blind you to what is Good & Right & True ... Open your eyes today to the fact that every grave in every military cemetery contains a beautiful life that was cruelly wasted -- snuffed out far too soon, merely to satisfy the greed &/or the malice of those too afraid to fight for themselves.

Please awaken to these Truths, my Friends ...

... and then please act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Two countries warring against one another is like one larger country self-destructing ... Two armies fighting each other is like one larger army committing suicide ... Two men fighting against one another is like one once-beautiful family tearing itself apart.” ~ inspired by Henri Barbusse



Re-membering Memorial Day – Part 2
... War: the Enemy of Peace
(05/25/2015)

You know, Memorial Day would be a lot more memorable if it didn't celebrate millions of brutal & needless murders. But don't tell that to your favorite politician -- or your favorite gun lobbyist -- or your favorite weapons manufacturer.

The United States has made war its favorite answer -- indeed, often its only answer -- to international differences of opinion for well over two hundred years. So it can't be really that surprising that our beloved Obama is blasting the bajeezus out of the Middle East & northern Africa -- creating large batches of freshly baked terrorists with each subsequent drone attack ... And it can't really be a surprise that American politicians still have the gall to stand before us and blatantly lie -- to stand before the world and tell us all how those murders were & are “necessary for national security” or “appropriate responses to probable threats” or “necessary for the promotion of democracy2 ... No, none of that is really that surprising to me.

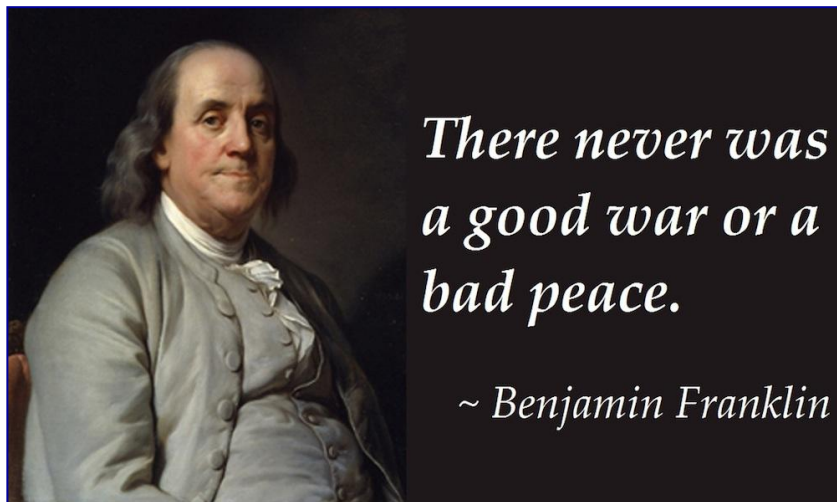
What *is* surprising -- and what will remain shocking to me until the day I die -- is the massive numbers of Americans who willingly wallow in -- and even brazenly champion -- such obviously obscene & powerfully pungent piles of bullshit.

My Friends, it's time we stopped allowing those “in power” to stink up the joint ... It's time we stopped enabling the crooked and the corrupt and the cowardly to sacrifice the lives of others for their own personal profit & comfort ... It's time we stopped supporting “leaders” who support needless murder.

Send them all on their way, my Friends ...
... and choose Peace instead.

Thank you.

“Today we know the truth. Our soldiers don't die for duty, or honor or country. They sacrifice their lives instead for the companies of Kellogg and Brown and Root. They don't fight for America; they fight for their own lives and for their buddies beside them because their government threw them into a war zone. They are not defending our freedoms; they are laying the foundation for permanent military bases to defend the freedoms of Exxon and Mobil and British Petroleum. They are not establishing democracy; they are establishing the basis for a ruthless economic occupation that will first become real after the military occupation has ended.” ~ Dr. Dahlia Wasfi



Re-memembering Memorial Day – Part 3
... Calling to the “Unfallen Dead”
(05/25/2015)

I realize that Memorial Day is a day typically reserved for honoring those Americans who have physically died in battle, and yet there is another death that takes place in combat that doesn't require that one's heart stop beating ... Yes, my Friends, *there is an emotional death* that occurs in battle -- a psychological scarring that often warps the rest of one's life whether one physically perishes in battle or not. And it is THIS far greater “death” that hundreds -- and possibly thousands (no one knows for sure) -- of United States drone pilots endure almost every day; a spiritual pain that slowly but surely sears their Souls and slowly but surely melts their minds both during and after every single mission.

And oh how many “glorious” missions there have been! How many catastrophic deeds of cowardice have been sent from on high -- sometimes “eliminating” the guilty, often murdering the innocent, and always -- ALWAYS -- entrenching, nay -- *intensifying*, the very hatred for their own country that started those current wars in the first place.

Yes, American drone pilots not only have to sit and steep in the knowledge that they are regularly murdering innocent men, women & children (*CHILDREN*, for God's sakes!), they also are forced to subconsciously (and sometimes knowingly) bask in the rancid truth that their actions are actually making the world a far more violent and a far less safe place for all of us in which to live.

And it is *this* knowledge that are those pilots' ultimate downfall -- it is *this* truth that brings their ultimate emotional & psychological and spiritual demise.

They are fighting an evil cause and they are using an evil means and they are thereby doing great evil ... and they know it. They are patently Good men & women being asked to do horrible deeds -- deeds that not only fail in their stated objective, but deeds that are actually making matters far worse. These innately Good men & women know these Truths, and yet they “do their job” anyway -- and in the process of doing so, they die long before their death.

I have immense Compassion for each & every one of them, just as much Compassion as I send to the families of all those they regularly murder from afar ... May they all know Peace one day; the Peace that can only come to those who have the courage to stand up & walk away from the evils that they do -- those who then have the integrity & the fortitude to dedicate their lives to being productive agents for Peace.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“We’ve been talking about this for a good while, the immorality of drones, dropping bombs on innocent people. It’s been over 200 children so far. These are war crimes!” ~ Princeton University professor Cornel West (quoted in February of 2013 -- the children kill count is much higher now)

“To the United States, a drone strike seems to have very little risk and very little pain. At the receiving end, it feels like war. Americans have got to understand that. If we were to use our technological capabilities carelessly ... then we should not be upset when someone responds with their equivalent, which is a suicide bomb in Central Park.” ~ retired General Stanley McChrystal

“Do the United States and its people really want to tell those of us who live in the rest of the world that our lives are not of the same value as yours? That President Obama can sign off on a decision to kill us with less worry about judicial scrutiny than if the target is an American? Would your Supreme Court really want to tell humankind that we, like the slave Dred Scott in the 19th century, are not as human as you are? ... I used to say of apartheid that it dehumanized its perpetrators as much as, if not more than, its victims.” ~ Desmond Tutu



Re-membering Memorial Day – Part 4
... What GOD really wants
(05/25/2015)

After studying the texts of the Bible intensively (and personally testing its various teachings radically) for the past eleven+ years of my life, at least one Truth has remained constant -- folks (Christian & non-Christian alike) can pretty much use the Bible to justify whatever behaviors they want to justify.

*On the one hand, the verses in the Bible can be used (and many times *have* been used) to justify or accept (or sometimes even openly encourage) the following quite wicked behaviors: murder (a la [Deuteronomy 13:6-10](#)) ... sex slavery (a la [Exodus 21:1-11](#)) ... animal cruelty (a la [Genesis 1:26](#)) ... human sacrifice (a la [Judges 19:22-29](#)) ... child abuse (a la [Judges 11:29-40](#)) ... rape (a la [Deuteronomy 22:28](#)) ... infanticide (a la [Hosea 13:16](#)) ... polygamy (a la [Genesis 4:19](#)) ... human slavery (a la [Leviticus 25:44-46](#) & [Ephesians 6:5](#)) ... homophobic bigotry (a la [Leviticus 20:13](#)) ... anti-Semitism (a la [Matthew 27:7](#) & [1 Thessalonians 2:14-16](#)) ... racism (a la [Deuteronomy 23:3](#) & [Nehemiah 13:3](#)) ... the denigration of women (a la [Genesis 3:16](#) & [1 Corinthians 14:33-35](#)) -- and, most poignant to today -- Memorial Day, the violent & even genocidal destruction of our enemies (a la [Deuteronomy 2:32-35](#), [Numbers 31:7-18](#), [Joshua 6:20-21](#), [1 Samuel 27:8-9](#)).

*And on the other hand (or on the other Heart, I should say), there is The Way of Jesus Christ -- a clarion call for us to show radical Love in the face of great fear, and a sacred summons for us to show radical nonviolence in the face of great anger ... And the verses that champion this dramatically Peace-full alternative are not exclusively announced by Jesus Christ. “[Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord](#)” comes from the Old Testament in [Deuteronomy 32:35](#) ... “[Bless those who persecute you ... Beloved, never avenge yourselves ... If your enemies are hungry, feed them ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with Good](#)” comes from the writings of Paul in [Romans 12:14-21](#) ... and “[Judgment will be without mercy for those who show no mercy; for mercy triumphs over judgment](#)” comes from James in [James 2:13](#).

And yet when it comes to announcing The Peaceful Way in the texts of the Bible, Jesus is undoubtedly a Master of no equal -- speaking with the greatest passion of a Way of dealing with conflict and enmity & evil that is as mind-blowing as it is Soul-opening. His is a Way where the sun shines on the wicked just as much as the good ([Matthew 5:45](#)), a Way where all trespassers are forgiven “[seventy times seven times](#)” ([Matthew 18:22](#)), a Way where those who live by the sword die by the sword ([Matthew 26:52](#)), a Way where we are all to “[become again as children](#)” ([Matthew 18:3](#)), a Way where we are to have the courage to deeply & actively be Kind to our enemies ([Matthew 5:40-48](#)), a Way where -- as such -- it is the makers of peace who are blessed ([Matthew 5:9](#)).

Now I could bring forth dozens -- even hundreds -- more of these “proofs” for both of these very different schools of thought on Love & war, and yet more than enough contrasting verses have been provided to at the very least prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that there clearly are two very different dogmas with the Bible's pages -- one that champions judgment & condemnation & violence (what some sometimes thinly veil as “self-defense” or “just warfare”), and the other that champions unconditional forgiveness & humble acceptance -- while encouraging selfless compassion & courageous self-sacrifice & active non-violence.

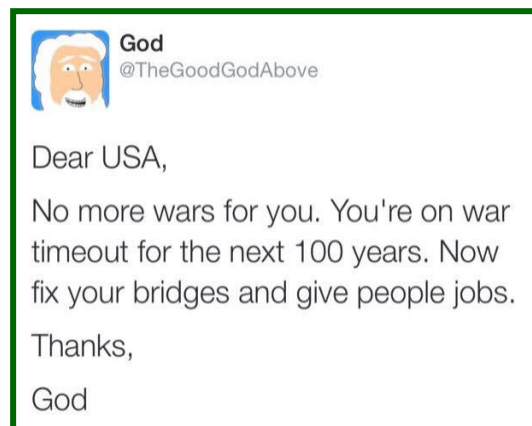
And how ironic it is that so many conservative Christians who call themselves “literalists” choose to blatantly ignore (or reinterpret, or even excuse) Jesus' summons for us to show radical Peace to our enemies, in order to support their own lusts for retaliation against them ... And how ironic as well that so many progressive Christians (& even so many non-Christians) are actually walking Jesus' Peace-full Way far more literally than their evangelical counterparts.

As most of you are aware, by far the majority of Americans profess to at least officially believe in the contents of the Bible, and as I have pointed out above, its verses are diverse enough to provide room for just about everybody -- from the most aggressive war-hawk to the most selfless pacifist.

And yet when I look at this incredible diversity of belief within the pages of the Bible itself, I am left to wonder -- not whether Christians *can* abandon Jesus' call to become agents of Peace-full nonviolence in this world and choose to support of war and retribution and “self-defense” instead -- but rather *why* they choose to do so ... And, seeing as how violence only begets violence & enmity only begets enmity & force only begets force -- and seeing as how I do so long for a world where others choose to Forgive instead of fracture and show Acceptance instead of aggression, I am also left to wonder: What can I do to get Christians to choose the Peaceful Way – what can I do to get them to adopt The Way of Christ?

“But I say to you that listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn for them the other; and from anyone who takes away your coat, give them your shirt as well ... Be merciful, just as my Father is merciful.”

~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:27-36)



Re-memembering Memorial Day – Part 5
... Bringing them HOME
(05/25/2015)

Home is not only where you were born -- and Home is not only where you grew up -- and Home is not only where your family lives -- and Home is not only where you feel most comfortable ... No, my Friends, HOME is where your Heart resides -- in every task you engage fully present, in every thought you ponder with gratitude, in every belief you intone with humility, in every interaction you infuse with Kindness ... HOME is where you are when you are acting as your True Self -- your Compassionate Self; your Humble Self; your Forgiving Self; your Loving Self.

As such, on this day I call for us *all* to help bring the world's soldiers HOME.

*I call all soldiers who were in combat in the past to come HOME -- by actively atoning for all violent deeds done, and forgiving yourselves while doing so.

*I call all soldiers who currently are in combat to come HOME -- by putting down your weapons and refusing to fight anymore.

*I call all of us who are not soldiers to help the aforementioned to come HOME -- by reaching out to them with forgiveness & compassion ... by offering them jobs as they abandon their military orders; by offering them clothes as they abandon their military uniforms; by offering them places to rest & reside as they abandon their military barracks; by offering them tasks of community service as they abandon their military tasks of death & destruction.

*And of course I call all would-be soldiers, all those young men & women who are considering joining the military to “fight for their country”, to come HOME by not doing so.

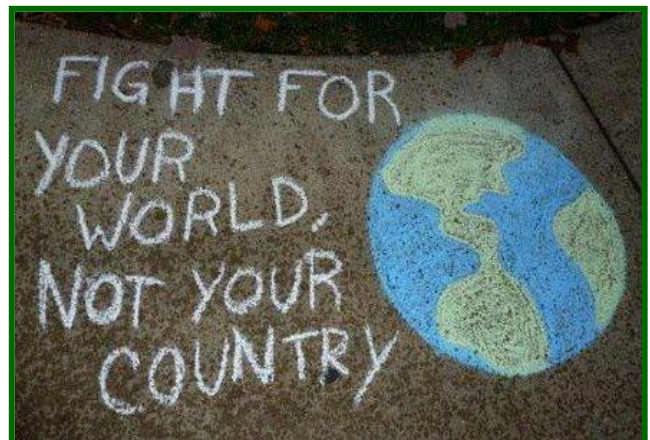
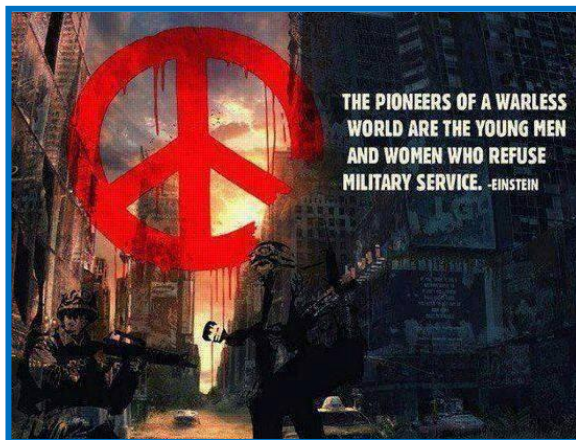
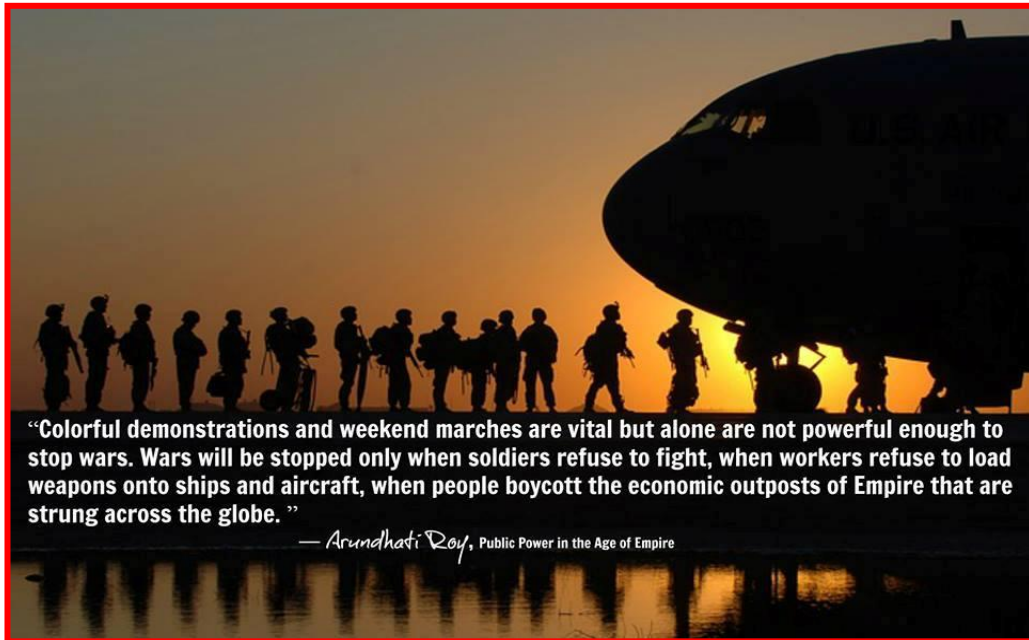
My Friends, no matter what our war-mongering “leaders” or our non-peaceful pastors say to the contrary, we humans are *all* one Family -- every American, every Afghani, every Christian, every Muslim; every member of every nation & every member of every faith ... Many of us have forgotten this fact (it is, after all, a fact so easy to forget) and yet a fact it remains ... And it is high-time for us to remember it anew ... And it is high time for us to act accordingly.

Essentially, my dear Friends, it is time for *all* of us to finally come HOME.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“There are perhaps many causes worth dying for, but there are none worth killing for ... Never think that war, no matter how 'necessary', nor how 'justified', is not always a crime.” ~ Albert Dietrich & Ernest Hemingway

“All war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal ... What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?” ~ John Steinbeck & Mahatma Gandhi



*“War is over ...
... if you want it to be.”
~ John Lennon*

The Way to BE (05/31/2015)

Infants only see the Divine all around them -- they have neither fog of ego to pierce nor the haze of convention to peer through when looking at those they meet. They always see the other for who they truly ARE: a direct manifestation of God; a conscious facet of the Universe; a potential Friendship waiting to bloom; the Prodigal Son returning home; a long-lost Lover who has returned from afar.

Of course, as we grow older and “learn the ways of the world”, we start to divide the people we meet into categories -- stranger or friend; enemy or ally, dangerous or safe; good or evil ... And if we are not careful (indeed, if we are not consciously Care-full) this is where our development gets stuck; bogged down in a dark and dreary world that our own fear-based biases & our own culture-instilled bigotries have filled with “liars” and “idiots” and “criminals” and “terrorists” and “those damn Democrats” (or Republicans, for that matter).

Of course, as many are now rediscovering, there is another Way to Be; another life in waiting -- a Life of Courage & a Life of Joy; a Life of Service & a Life of Peace ... And to re-enter this realm of Light & Goodness -- the very same Kingdom in which we all used to revel & celebrate as young toddlers long ago -- all that is required is for us to have the Humility to see **all** the others in our lives as Children of God ...

... and then the Courage to act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(~ inspired by Mike Dooley)



The irony of hate & Love (06/03/2015)

It was ironic enough to recently read about a bunch of Christians in Phoenix (Arizona) acting aggressively (ironically, a lot like Mohammad) towards Muslims, but to then see those Muslims respond peacefully (ironically, just like Jesus Christ) was absolutely priceless!

It just goes to show you: The Way of Selfless Kindness works no matter which version of God (including no God at all) you happen to worship.

Peace to *all*!

“It's a Universal Law that intolerance is the primary indicator of ignorance. An ill-educated person tends to behave with arrogant aggression, whereas a truly profound education always brings forth humility and respect.”

~ inspired by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

*“In the practice of tolerance, one's enemy is the best teacher ... In the practice of LOVE, one's enemy is the **only** teacher.” ~ inspired by the Dalai Lama & Jesus Christ*

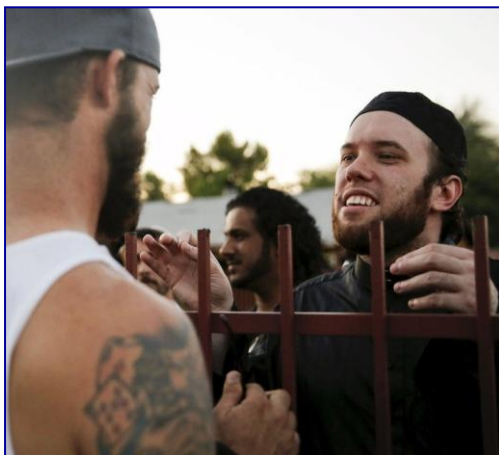
“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”
~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:1-2)



*“Put your sword back into its place; for all who use the sword will perish by the sword ... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:52 & Matthew 5:44)*



“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy ... Be good to those who hate you ... Blessed are the Peacemakers.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 12:1, Luke 6:27 & Matthew 5:9)



Tribute to Tank Man (06/05/2015)

Twenty-six years ago today, a brave Soul in China known now only as “The Tank Man” stared down an entire column of advancing tanks near Tiananmen Square -- and won. Granted, since then he has seemingly disappeared without a trace. No one knows his name to this very day, and some claim that he was probably secretly tortured & executed for his bold act of nonviolent resistance to Chinese tyranny -- and thus many believe that his mission failed. But what these anti-Chinese & pro-aggression critics do not understand is the very same thing that most governments still fail to understand to this very day ... They fail to understand that **“The Tank Man” actually won.**

Indeed, even if he was tortured and murdered that very night -- even though the Chinese government soon thereafter did violently roust the Tiananmen protestors and clamp down with martial law (protests, by the way, that were anything but peaceful in the hours immediately prior to the massacre that followed) -- even though the Chinese government does persist (alongside Syria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United States) in being one of the worst human rights violators in the world -- “The Tank Man” *still* won.

And this is because true Victory cannot be measured in shifts in political power or transfers of economic benefit, just as true Success cannot be proven by a longer life or greater health or more material abundance ... No, on June 5th, 1989, “The Tank Man” won the greatest of Victories -- for he risked his entire life for Justice; he offered his entire life for others; he gave his entire life for Love. And in so doing he has inspired HUNDREDS of THOUSANDS of protestors to engage in THOUSANDS of powerful, nonviolent acts of protests all over the world since that day.

Yes, “The Tank Man”'s great deed might have only lasted for fifteen minutes, and he might very well have died shortly thereafter, **and yet** his nonviolent courage still raises the Banner of Freedom all over the world, and his noble sacrifice still sounds the Trumpet of Justice to this very day.



So, my Friends, let us honor “The Tank Man” today -- Let us honor his ultimate sacrifice by going forth into our own communities to boldly & peacefully stamp out all the forms of injustice & bigotry & oppression we find there ...

*Where the poor are being ignored, let us feed the poor.

*Where the animals are being maimed & murdered, let us stand between their innocence and the slaughterhouse.

*Where the homeless are being denigrated, let us shelter the homeless.

*Where those of color are being brutalized, let us make a wall between them and their attackers.

*And where those of faiths other than our own are being provoked & insulted, let us reach out to them with open acts of Compassion & Kindness.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Bombarding Bullyism (06/07/2015)

*“I will love myself despite the ease with which I lean towards the opposite ...
Standing up for yourself doesn't have to mean embracing violence.”
~ Shane Koyczan*

Almost every single one of us intensely dislikes someone or some group of someones; almost every single one of us has enemies we wish we could eradicate from our lives without consequence; almost every single one of us wishes we could remove “them” from our world -- and as such every single one of us is essentially either a bully or a bully-wannabe ...

Yep, almost everyone I know has it in for somebody ... Maybe it's a boss for being so mean, or maybe it's a co-worker for being “such a liar” ... Maybe it's men for being so abusive, or maybe it's women for being so manipulative ... Maybe it's Jews for being so powerful, or maybe it's Buddhists for being “so darnn passive” ... Maybe it's politicians for being so corrupt, or maybe it's preachers for being so condemning ... Maybe it's Blacks for being such “thugs”, or maybe it's Whites for being such racists ... Maybe its gays & lesbians & transgenders for being so “queer”, or maybe it's heterosexuals for being so -- well, straight ... Maybe it's those “damn Republicans” for so obviously not caring about the poor, or maybe it's those “damn Democrats” for merely pretending to care about the same ... Maybe it's the 20,000 ISIS terrorists for giving in to hate (or the 1.6 billion peace-loving Muslims for not trying hard enough to stop them), or maybe it's the 2000 U.S. drone pilots who are manufacturing fresh terrorists each & every day.

It's true, there are a lot of different beliefs & cultures & traditions out there -- a lot of people out there with values that directly contradict our own – a lot of folks who are making choices that cause us pain or discomfort; actions that make us seethe & want to boil over into acts of “justified” bullying.

Fair enough ... Seethe if you must and boil over into aggression & hatred if you wish. Just know this, my Friends: until you recognize your own inner bully and set him aside -- until you recognize your own inner bigot and put her gently yet firmly in the corner for “time out”, you will suffer greatly -- and you will cause great suffering for others while you do so.

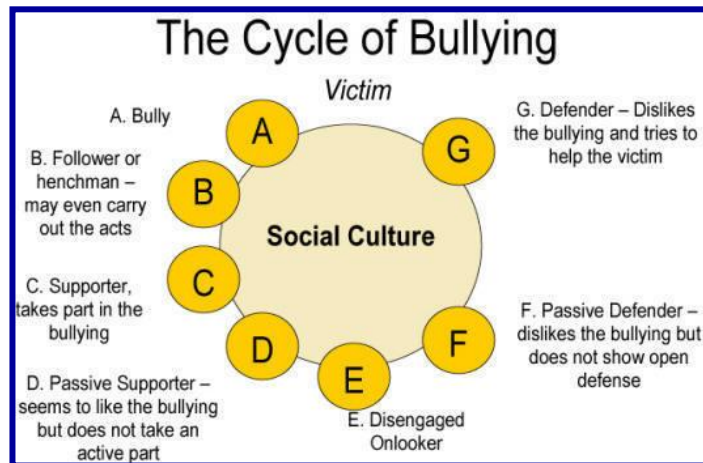
And the only Way out of this vile & rancid maze of distrust & denigration is to **do the very opposite** of what your discomfort whispers -- to do the very opposite of what your fear moans & wails -- to do the very opposite of what your anger shouts & summons ... Namely, you must have the guts to Love those who you hate -- You must have the guts to compliment those you would rather condemn; and you must have the guts to Care for those you would rather kill; and you must have the guts to serve those you would rather extinguish; and you must have the guts to be Kind to those you would rather bully.

In essence, you must choose to LOVE others despite the ease with which you lean towards the opposite ... because standing up for your True Self means standing up for the True Selves of your enemies; because standing up for your True Self means peacefully embracing Peace.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"You should be nicer to him,' a schoolmate had once said to me of some awfully ill-favored boy. 'He has no friends.' This, I realized with a pang of pity that I can still remember, was only true as long as everybody agreed to it." ~ Christopher Hitchens

P.S. All forms of aggression entrench aggression ... All forms of violence intensify violence ... All forms of bullying create bullies.



So take a long hard look in the mirror to See your SELF ... Take a long hard look at your mind to find your fears ... Take a long hard look at your fears to find the victims of your bigotries ... Take a long hard look at your victims to See them anew ... Take that long hard look -- and then act accordingly.

The solution to fire is water ... The solution to ignorance is knowledge ... The solution to arrogance is humility ... The solution to violence is peace ... The solution to hatred is Love (the verb) ... The solution to bullying is Kindness (given especially *to bullies*).



TIPS FOR TEACHING KINDNESS TO CHILDREN

1. Walk the walk. Kindness begets kindness. Empathy begets empathy. Caring and sharing lead to sharing and caring.

2. Teach manners. Start before your child can talk by teaching a child the following two signs:



3. Expect every day acts of kindness. Do not reward except maybe with a smile, or a "Thank you."

4. Plan deliberate acts of kindness as family affairs. A small family act: placing coins in a McDonald's charity box. A larger one: picking and taking gently used toys to a local family homeless shelter. Another larger act: serving meals at a homeless shelter.

5. Use Poster Quotes About What Matters as reminders to all family members to practicing kindness. Use such quotes as discussion topics at Family Meetings.

Walking the Talk (06/09/2015)

“There are plenty of liberals who talk big about poverty and injustice but who rarely if ever actually care for the poor. They live detached lives that sound of social responsibility but reek of comfortable consumption ... Meaningful charity – and therefore meaningful redistribution – only happens when people fall in Love with each other across class lines.” ~ inspired by Shane Claiborne

Every one of us has received some measure of wealth without earning it, just as every single poorer person in our midst has somehow been unfairly denied a similar Grace. We all own noticeably more than at least one other person nearby. So today my Friends, take the time to look around and notice that injustice ...

... and then do our part to even the scales.

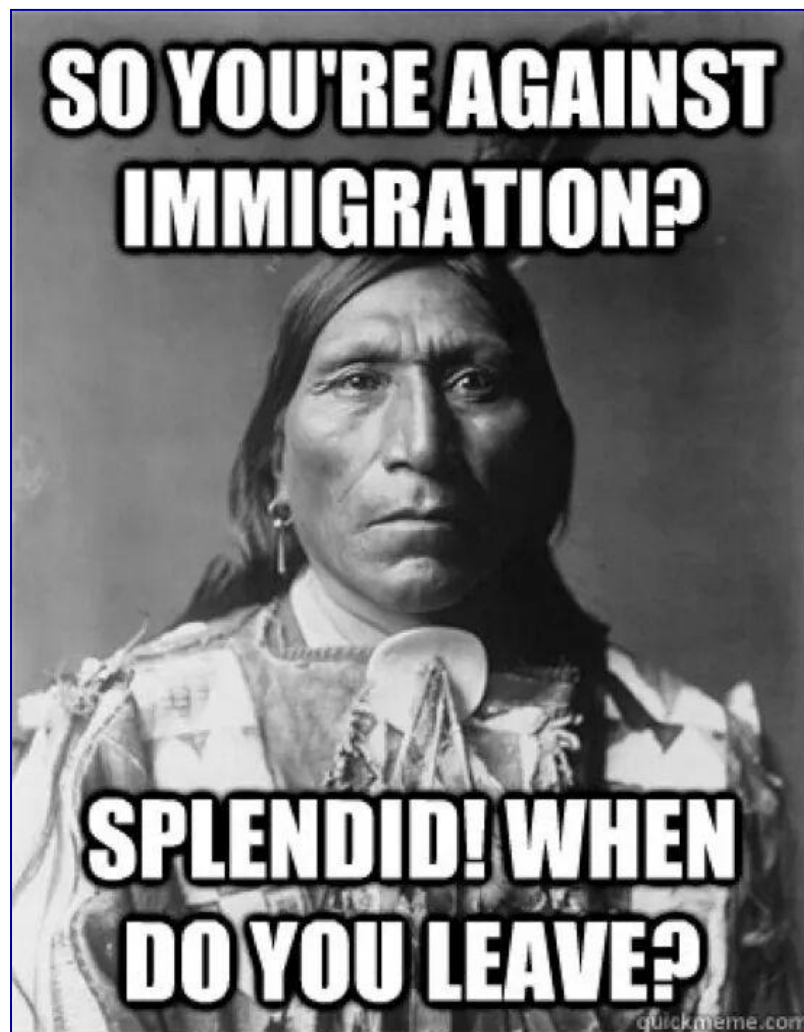
Thank you.



Calling out the Hypocrites
(06/11/2015)

Hypocrisy is not exclusively a trait of those who call themselves “conservative”, and yet it is a disturbingly common one nonetheless ... Here's an idea: instead of blasting or condemning or criticizing or ostracizing the folks in your life who you dislike -- or those who bother you or who make you uncomfortable, how about reaching out to those people and making them your own instead?

Peace to *all* ... S



“I take issue with many people's description of others as being 'Illegal' immigrants. At least as far as I'm concerned, there aren't any illegal Human Beings at all.” ~ inspired by Dennis Kucinich

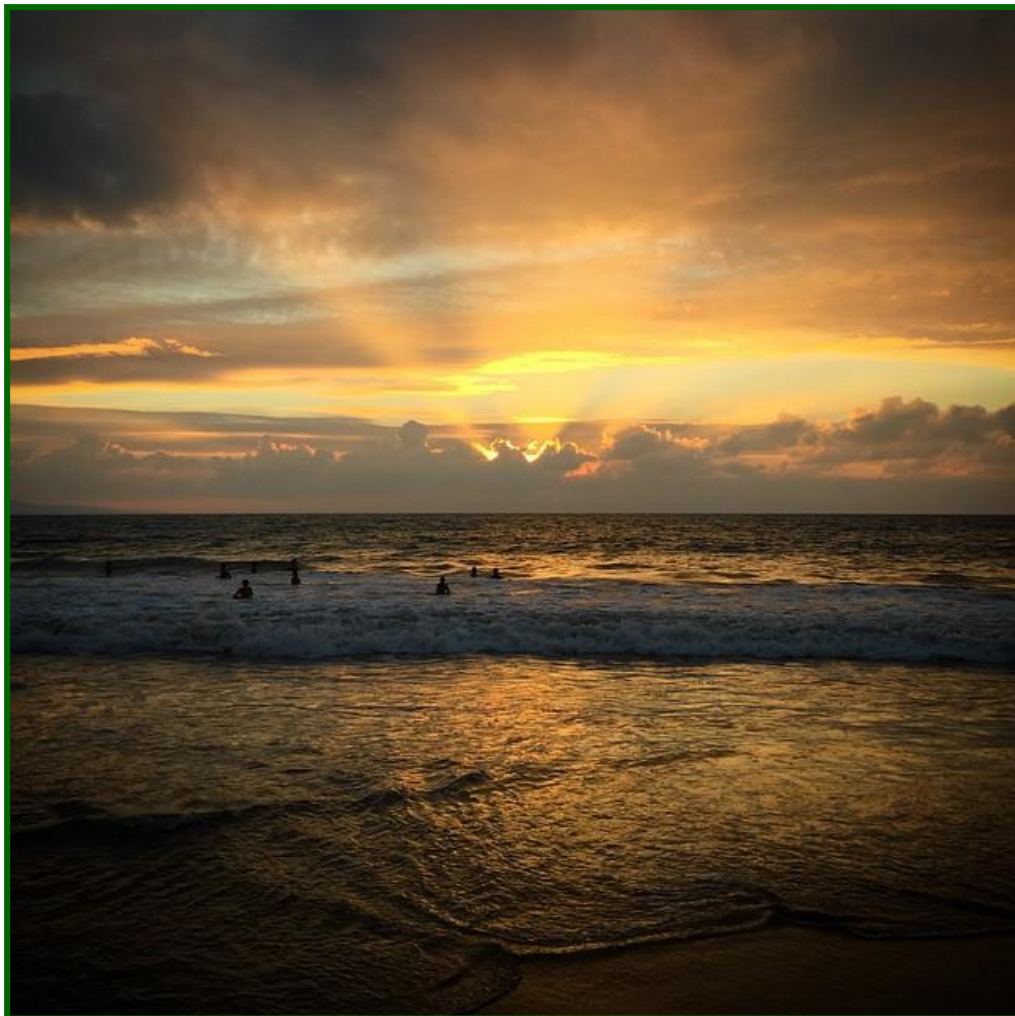
This thing called LIFE
(06/25/2015)

*“It is said that your life flashes before your eyes just before you die.
That is true ... It's called Life.” ~ Terry Pratchett*

The fact of the matter is that today is quite possibly the very last day you will ever have to go and BE what you were truly born to BE -- possibly the very last day for you to hug a stranger; ... possibly the very last day for you to forgive a friend; ... possibly the very last day for you to Give to the downtrodden; ... possibly the very last day for you to atone for a past wrongdoing; ... possibly the very last day for you to do an anonymous Kindness for a loved one;... possibly the very last day for you to reach out in humble Forgiveness to an enemy.

Today might very well be the last day you've got, my Friends ...

... so be sure to **go and make it a GOOD ONE!!!**



Shining Bright
(07/08/2015)

“How far each tiny candle throws its beams of light!
So shines every good deed in a weary world.”
~ William Shakespeare



The Great Cleansing (07/16/2015)

Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin and Pinochet (and Bush and Cheney and Obama and Clinton) are only the primary spokesmen for the over-arching attitude of domination and greed that reside near the Heart of us all. We all combat the demons of arrogance & callousness every day in all that we do, and until that source of selfishness is cleared, there will always be confusion and condemnation & hypocrisy & hatred in all our lives ...

Until we choose to make life about Giving instead of getting, there will be hunger ... Until we choose to make life about Forgiveness instead of punishment, there will be injustice ... Until we choose to make life about Kindness instead of self-defense, there will be violence and war.

My Friends, every single one of us can play an important role in this Great (and most needed) Cleansing, and every single one of us can get started doing so today -- by simply repeatedly pausing and choosing anew:

Instead of saving or earning, **choose Giving ...**

Instead of judging or condemning, **choose Forgiveness ...**

Instead of anger or fear or aloofness, **choose Loving Kindness.**

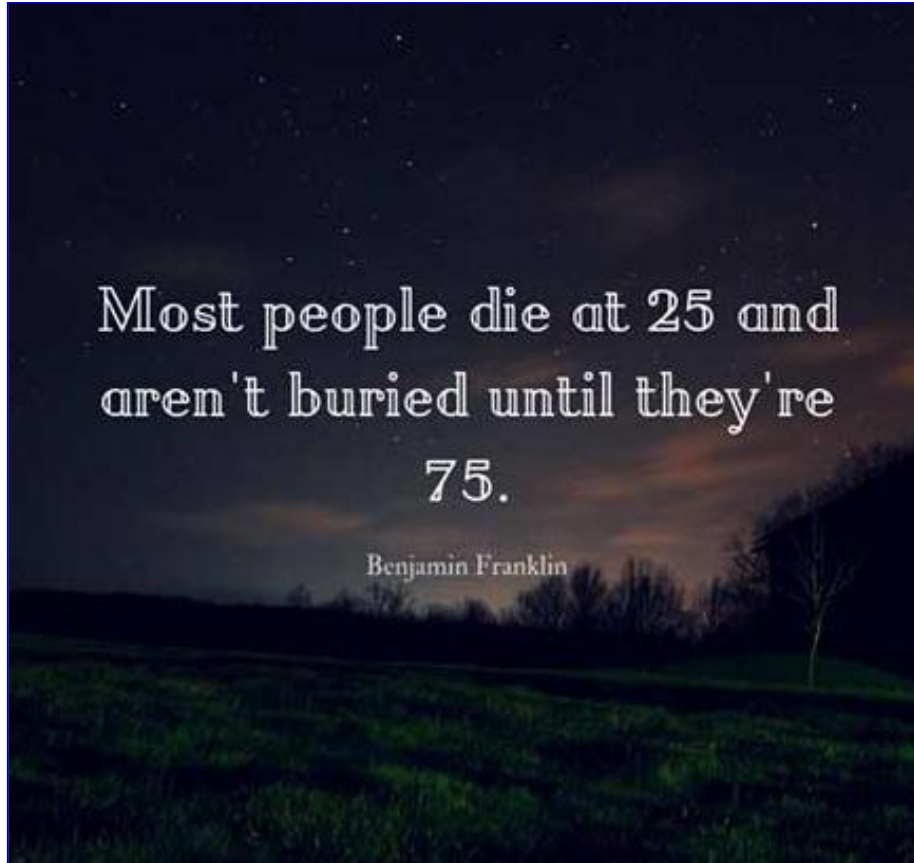
Amen ... Let it be so.

(~ inspired by J. Krishnamurti)



Doctor's orders: Live forever
(07/19/2015)

With every act of selfless Kindness, you are reborn anew ...
This doctor recommends getting reborn on an hourly basis.



Any ray of Reality (07/29/2015)

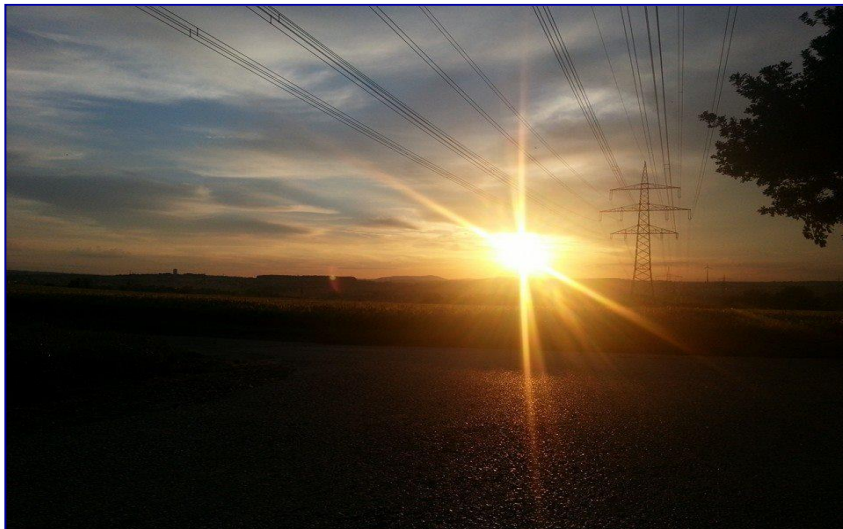
“President William McKinley, the third American president to be assassinated, lived for several days after he was shot, and towards the end, his wife started crying and screaming, "I want to go too! I want to go too!" ... And with his last measure of strength, McKinley turned, smiled gently up at her, and spoke his last words: 'Ah, my Love, but we are all going.'”

~ inspired by John Green

Our minds are like prisms -- pass any ray of pure Reality through them and it is immediately divided into more than seven hues; broken down by all our beliefs & dogmas; carved up by all our convictions & certainties; dismantled by all that we hold dear; eviscerated by all that we long for, and fragmented by all that we fear. Indeed, pass anything at all through the spontaneous mind and it becomes dual -- divided -- separate from the Whole. Light or dark ... right or wrong ... friend or enemy ... life or death ... even Alive or Dead.

And yet the **Truth** of the matter -- the Truth of any matter; indeed, the Truth of matter itself -- is that there is no separation at all. For without the tempering darkness, Light would be but a blaring glare ... Without the humility of error, Right would be but a bland & feeble knowing ... Without the pain inflicted by enemies, Love would be but an inaudible whisper of affection ... Without the finality of death, Life would be but a droning adventure without Worth or Meaning.

For in reality, there is no life OR death; no being born OR dying ... Rather, there is only one almost-eternal continuum stretching forever between the two -- one miraculous loop of “BirthLIFEDeath” -- one phenomenal phenomenon of Existence -- one brilliant Awakening to the conscious awareness of not only ourselves as separate from the All, but our Selves as fully & completely immersed therein -- one sometimes jagged Journey from the ONE and back again.



In the dry, intellectual, logical sense Kipling was right when he said that “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet”, and yet when we take this ray of Light and remove it from the prism of our minds -- when we chose to SEE it for what it truly IS; when we SEE it complete and whole and without disunity, then we realize that this postulation is actually utter nonsense ... For in reality there is no single East or West; there is no Up or Down – In Reality, whenever we look towards the setting sun, our line of Sight does not end until it circumnavigates the globe and returns to where we already are. We are not looking West -- we are merely approaching **Here** stealthily from behind ... So too when we look “up” into the night sky, we forget that we are actually hanging by gravity's thread -- that when we point our fingers “up” to the Heavens we are actually dangling our hands downward into the great, cool, galactic star-speckled vastness that dives forever beneath us for as far as we could ever see.

Essentially then, “Never the twain shall meet” is utterly ridiculous, for the sole reason that the “twain” are actually meeting each other everywhere -- indeed, the “twain” are always together in one sky; always together in one galaxy; always together in one Universe; always together with God -- and always together within each of us as well.



And so it is with life --- and so it is with death. Yes, being born is an entering of life and dying is a departing from it. And yet so much more is connected with these Truths when we take them from the prism of our minds.

For there were endless events that led to your birth -- endless choices made & risks taken; endless mistakes made & endless triumphs celebrated; endless tragedies & endless transcendences thereof. And all of them led to your being born -- to you entering this majestic life at precisely the moment you chose to enter. And the same will be true of your death -- for no matter when it comes or how it comes to be, the echoes of your passing will become one with the over-arching Hum of the Universe, and contribute to the Beautiful Birthing of every being that enters life thereafter.

And because the magnitude of your life -- the courage you display and the virtues you champion and the injustices you fight and the freedoms you celebrate -- directly affects & molds & influences every single being who will ever be born thereafter, it is extremely important that you go forth today and **LIVE YOUR LIFE ACCORDINGLY** -- with great Courage, ... and with great Humility, ... and with great Compassion, ... and with great LOVE.

No one knows what happens after we die, my Friends, and yet no one can deny that what we choose to DO (and what we avoid Doing) in this lifetime travels onward through eternity after we depart ...

As such, let your life overflow with Goodness & Kindness & Joy today, my Friends. Let your life be lived in such a magnificently radiant way that death will never catch you unprepared -- indeed, that when death does finally come to take you, let it tremble to take you at all.

Amen ... let it be so.

(inspired by Turiya, Osho, Bukowski,
Tecumseh & a Kempis)





*“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*